



# Camdenton R-III School District

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**SUBJECT:** Changes in District's Attendance Policy

Dear Camdenton R-III School District Parents/Guardians:

Camdenton R-III School District has made a number of modifications in its Attendance Policy. These changes will take effect during the 2009-2010 school year. The changes were recommended by a team of school personnel who were concerned about the number of days students are not in attendance and how those absences affect student learning. The new Attendance Policy was adopted by the School Board on November 10, 2008.

***Camdenton's Intermediate and Elementary (K- 6) Attendance Policy now reads as follows:***

## **Attendance Standards (K-6):**

The following absences will be excused. Documentation must be provided as indicated.

1. Illness or injury of the student, with written parent verification up to 5 days. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day of consecutive absence, verification from a medical provider will be required.
2. Illness or injury of a member of the student's family when the student's presence is necessary or expected, with parent verification.
3. Medical appointments, with written appointment confirmation by medical provider.
4. Funeral, with written excuse from parent. The building principal may require a program or other evidence from services as well.
5. Religious observances, with written excuse from parent.
6. Other appointments that cannot be scheduled outside attendance hours, such as court appearances, with written excuse from parent.
7. Absences due to parental request will be excused up to ten (10) days at which time additional parent requests will be marked unexcused. (This would include vacation days.)

All other absences and any absence for which required documentation is not provided are unexcused.

### **Consequences for Violations (K-6)**

Attendance in early grades is crucial to later academic development. In addition, attendance habits are formed in early grades, and many later attendance problems can be averted with intensive family and student interventions in early grades. For this reason building principals, with the assistance of building staff, will closely monitor student attendance and implement intervention strategies and other actions as follows:

1. Any time a student is absent and the parents have not contacted the school, the building principal or designee will attempt to contact the parent by phone.
2. When a student has accumulated eight (8) excused absences or three (3) unexcused absences a letter will be sent to notify the parent of the number of accumulated absences to date and specify any specific concerns.
3. When a student has accumulated twelve (12) excused absences or four (4) unexcused absences, the building principal will schedule a conference with the parents at a time convenient with the parents. The purpose of this conference is to determine why the student is not attending school regularly; to examine the student's academic performance; to communicate district attendance expectations; to provide information about compulsory attendance laws and educational neglect; to elicit suggestions from family members about increasing the student's engagement with school; and to create an attendance plan that includes specific intervention strategies designed to improve the student's attendance.
4. When a student has accumulated fifteen (15) excused absences or five (5) unexcused absences, the district will determine whether there is reason to suspect educational neglect or whether the parent is violating the compulsory attendance laws. If so, the district shall contact the Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Social Services and/or the Juvenile Justice Center.
5. More than twenty (20) excused absences or five (5) or more unexcused absences will be a factor in determining whether the student may be retained or required to attend summer school as a condition of promotion. A second contact to the Children's Division of the Department of Social Services for educational neglect and or the Juvenile Justice Center for suspicion of violating compulsory attendance laws may be made.

Students are expected to make up assignments from missed classes within the time period as specified by each building. Students who do not complete missed assignments in the required time may be required to attend academic support sessions outside of the regular school day.

The building principal may waive any conference if the absences were caused by a specific event or long-term illness. In cases where the district is aware that a student must be absent for an extended period of time, the district will arrange for the student to receive instruction by other appropriate means.

***Camdenton's Secondary (Grades 7 -12) Attendance Policy now reads as follows:***

**Attendance Standards (7-12):**

The following absences will be excused. Documentation must be provided as indicated.

1. Illness or injury of the student, with written parent verification up to 5 days. On the 6<sup>th</sup> day of consecutive absence, verification from a medical provider will be required.
2. Illness or injury of a member of the student's family when the student's presence is necessary or expected, with parent verification.
3. Medical appointments, with written appointment confirmation by medical provider.
4. Funeral, with written excuse from parent. The building principal may require a program or other evidence from services as well.
5. Religious observances, with written excuse from parent.
6. Other appointments that cannot be scheduled outside attendance hours, such as court appearances, with written excuse from parent.
7. Absences due to parental request (which include vacation days) will be excused up until the 10<sup>th</sup> day. At that time, additional parental request absences will be unexcused.

All other absences and any absence for which required documentation is not provided are unexcused. Excessive parent excused days without documentation may be ruled unexcused. After 5 consecutive days we need a parent's note.

**Consequences for Violations (7-12)**

Students will be expected to make up all assignments from missed classes regardless of whether an absence is excused or unexcused. Each building may set reasonable limits regarding the timeframe in which missed work may be completed. Attendance and participation are part of a successful learning experience, so students with any unexcused absence, away from assigned area, truancy or out-of-school suspension will be issued a 1% academic deduction per day, for class periods missed. The total percentage points will be deducted from the total grade at the end of each quarter per class period. This academic penalty is intended as a deterrent to excessive absences.

The district will contact the Children's Division (CD) of the Department of Special Services/Juvenile Officer or the local prosecutor in cases where the district has a reasonable

suspicion that a student's lack of attendance constitutes educational neglect on the part of the parents or that parents are in violation of the compulsory attendance law. No such action will be taken unless other strategies and interventions have been implemented and proven ineffective.

### **Notice and Due Process (K-12)**

A summary of the Board-adopted attendance policy and related procedures will be published in student and other handbooks and posted on the district's website. In addition, students and their parents will be notified prior to the imposition of any consequence and given the opportunity to appeal the imposition of the consequence to the superintendent. On appeal, the student and his or her parents may present evidence that the student has missed fewer days than the district's records show or that an absence recorded as unexcused should have been recorded as excused. An appeal will not be taken based on whether the reason for the absence justifies an exception to this rule.

### **Intervention and Engagement Strategies (K-12)**

The district will utilize the following intervention and engagement strategies as part of the district's overall approach to improve student attendance and achievement. The superintendent or designee will:

1. Conduct community-wide public relations efforts that stress the importance of school attendance.
2. Collaborate with community groups and other organizations that engage youth in activities to create a consistent message about the importance of education.

Building-level administrators and staff will:

1. Contact the family any time a student is absent.
2. Assign truant students to academic support, detention, Saturday school, alternative suspension program, or in-school suspension rather than out-of-school suspension.
3. Assign students who are frequently absent to a staff mentor/lead time advisor and an intervention team.
4. Assign students to guided study halls during the school day.
5. Assign students to tutoring outside of the regular academic day.
6. Provide access to behavioral counseling, including information about community resources.
7. Facilitate family counseling sessions focusing on the power of the family to provide solutions.

8. Conduct in-home visits.
9. Post attendance numbers and percentages every three weeks to make students and staff aware of the attendance rate. Create friendly competition by posting attendance rates by lead time classes. Individual student attendance information will not be publicly posted.

### **Evaluation (K-12)**

Building principals, with the assistance of building staff, will conduct three week attendance checks throughout the year. Building principals will also conduct quarterly, semester, and annual evaluations of all strategies used to improve student attendance. The evaluations will include:

1. A summary of which strategies are being implemented.
2. The number of participants.
3. Records of targeted interventions for particular students.
4. Changes in overall attendance rates.
5. Changes in attendance rates and academic achievement of students participating in the various strategies.
6. Changes in attendance rates and academic achievement of individual students receiving targeted intervention.
7. Any other data that can be used to assess the effectiveness of strategies and interventions.

Strategies found to be ineffective will be modified or replaced. The building principal will provide evaluation information to the superintendent.

The new Attendance Policy will aid us in meeting our goals to educate all children. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

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Tim Hadfield  
Assistant Superintendent  
Camdenton R-III School District

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Paula D. Brown  
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District Attendance Focus Team Leader