



Student Attendance

#200.29

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Last Reviewed/Revised:	March 2021
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education
Next Scheduled Review:	2025

POLICY STATEMENT:

All students at the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board are expected to be in regular attendance at school. Our common vision of the learner is that of a responsible citizen, a collaborative contributor, and a self-directed, responsible, and lifelong learner. This vision of the learner can best be realized through regular attendance at school. The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board believes that the responsibility for the daily attendance of students rests with the parents and/or guardians, the student where they are of age, and school board staff.

APPLICATION AND SCOPE:

It is the policy of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board to support parents and/or guardians so that students can demonstrate regular and punctual attendance at school.

It is the policy of the Board that administrative procedures be developed to:

- Direct the appropriate staff regarding the processes for recording and maintaining student attendance records;
- Have a process for communicating student absences/lates to parents/guardians; and
- Monitor safe arrival, as well as the courses of action that may be taken for instances of truancy and habitual neglect of duty to attend school regularly and punctually.

REFERENCES:

- [Education Act R.S.O. 1990 E.2 and Part II \(School Attendance\)](#)
- [Ontario Regulation 298 School Operations](#)
- [Home Schooling Policy 200.16](#)
- [Home Instruction Policy 200.17](#)
- [Supervised Alternative Learning Policy 200.06](#)
- [Student Behaviour Discipline and Safety Policy 200.09](#)
- [Policy/Program Memorandum 119 "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools"](#)
- [Policy/Program Memorandum 145 "Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour."](#)
- [Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)

FORMS:

- Student Extended Absence Request Form
- Student Attendance Referral Form (11-15 Days Absent)
- 30-45-60 Day Consecutive Days of Absence Form
- Request for Modified Day Form
- Student Intent to be Absent Form
- Consideration of Exclusion Form



APPENDICES:

- Appendix A: Parent Discussion Guide
- Appendix B: Attendance Exclusion Letter
- Appendix C: Exclusion Appeals

DEFINITIONS:

Student Attendance

For the purposes of these procedures, *student attendance* refers to regular day-school attendance at a Catholic elementary or secondary school.

Guardian (Ed. Act, Part 2, 18)

In addition to having the meaning ascribed in section 1 (of the Act), includes anyone who has received into his or her home a person, other than his or her own child, of compulsory school age and that person resides with him or her or is in his or her care.

Attendance Review Committee

A committee consisting of Superintendent, Principal, School Attendance Counsellor and any other community representatives as appropriate. Purpose of the committee is to review case and explore other potential strategies.

School Staff

May include and are not limited to: classroom teachers, Chaplaincy Leader, guidance teachers, child and youth workers, early childhood educators, social workers (attendance counsellors), mental health leads, student success teachers, special education resource teachers, and the principal of Continuing and Alternative Education and other staff the principal deems appropriate.

School Administration

Any Principal or Vice Principal appointed by the Board.

School Attendance Counsellor

The Board's social workers are the Board's student attendance counsellors as per the Education Act.

Provincial School Attendance Counsellor (Ed. Act, Part 2, 24 (1))

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint an officer, to be the Provincial School Attendance Counsellor, who shall, under the direction of the Minister, superintend and direct the enforcement of compulsory school attendance.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:

Information

The purpose of this administrative procedure is to provide direction to parents, principals school administrators, teachers, support staff and students regarding their respective responsibilities related to regular and punctual attendance at school.

Requirements (listed below) for school attendance are outlined in Part 2, subsection 21 of the Education Act in statutes and regulations, as well as through guidelines provided to school districts related to the school register (Education Act R.S.O. 1990, Chapter E.2, Part II – School Attendance and O. Reg 298 s. 23).

Compulsory School Age

- Every person who attains the age of six years **on or before** the first school day in September in any year shall attend an elementary or secondary school on every school day from the first school day in September in that year until the person attains the age of 18 years; and
- Every person who attains the age of six years **after** the first school day in September in any year shall attend an elementary or secondary school on every school day from the first school day in September in the next succeeding year until the last school day in June in the year in which the person attains the age of 18 years.



Person under Compulsory Age

- Where a person under compulsory school age has been enrolled as a pupil in an elementary school, this section applies during the period for which the person is enrolled as if he or she were of compulsory school age. 2006, c. 28, s. 5(1)

Participation in Equivalent Learning

A person shall be considered to be attending school when he or she is participating in equivalent learning if the equivalent learning program, course of study or other activity and the group, organization or entity providing it have been approved under paragraph 3.0.1 of subsection 8 (1). 2006, c. 28, s. 5 (1).

Duty of parent, etc.

The parent or guardian of a person who is required to attend school under this section shall cause the person to attend school as required by this section unless the person is at least 16 years old and has withdrawn from parental control. 2006, c. 28, s. 5 (1).

Administrative Procedures

1.0 Student Attendance General Principles

- 1.1 Cooperation** - Maintaining an effective school environment where regular and punctual school attendance exists, requires the cooperation and collaboration of students, families, district staff and, where necessary, community services.
- 1.2 Promotion** – It is critical that all staff promote regular and punctual attendance at school as a crucial mechanism to ensure improved student achievement. This promotion should be done through communication platforms such as newsletters and announcements on a regular basis. Promotion of good attendance is greatly enhanced with diverse school programming and co-curricular activities are relevant and accessible to students.

2.0 Responsibilities for Students and Parents/Guardians

- 2.1** It is the duty of a parent or guardian of a person who is required to attend school to cause the student to attend school regularly and punctually as required under the Education Act.
- 2.2** All students shall attend classes punctually and regularly.
- 2.3** It is the duty of a parent, or a student where the student is an adult, to give a reason for any student absence or late arrival to the principal or designate before the absence or upon return to school after an absence.
- 2.4** If a student will be absent for an extend period of consecutive days, a parent/guardian must notify the principal using the Student Extended Absence Request form (Form 1).

3.0 Record Keeping, Verification and Reporting

- 3.1** Students shall be admitted to class if they are returning from an absence or are late once it has been verified by the principal or designate.
- 3.2** Parents shall be promptly contacted by the school when a student is recorded absent, and their absence has not been verified.
- 3.3 Elementary Schools** - Student attendance shall be recorded at the beginning of each school day and immediately following the lunch break (the second nutrition break for schools on the balanced school day schedule).



- 3.4 Secondary Schools** - Student attendance shall be recorded at the beginning of each period of the school day.

4.0 Secretaries

- 4.1** It is the duty of the school secretary to follow the processes and procedures set out by the administrative procedure and school administrator for:
- 4.1.1 Maintaining accurate records of student attendance in the Student Management System (e.g., PowerSchool);
 - 4.1.2 Recording and reporting to the principal or designate reasons regarding absence or lateness from parents/guardians or adult students (18+); and
 - 4.1.3 Running attendance summary reports at the request of the administrator (usually monthly).

5.0 Teachers

- 5.1** It is the legal duty of the classroom teacher to maintain an accurate record of attendance for each class, to report absenteeism and late arrivals promptly to the principal or designate, and to follow the process established by the principal for admission of students who are late or are returning from an absence.
- 5.2** Teachers shall not readmit a student who is returning to school from an unverified absence or who is late arriving to school unless approved by the principal or designate.
- 5.3** Teachers shall notify the parent/guardian or the adult student and report to the principal or designate in the instance when there are recurring absences that are resulting in a negative impact on student achievement. Suggestion for discussing problematic attendance with parents/guardians are listed in (Appendix A).
- 5.4** Where appropriate, teachers will work with the administrator to follow the steps in the Student Attendance Referral (Form 2).

6.0 Principals

- 6.1** It is the duty of the principal to establish a process for recording daily attendance, promptly reporting unverified absenteeism to parents/guardians, admitting students, verifying reasons for absenteeism or lateness, maintaining accurate records of student attendance and to follow Section 12 of these procedures for supporting students and families with problematic attendance.
- 6.2** When a teacher has reported to the principal or designate regarding recurring absences that are resulting in a negative impact on student achievement, the principal shall follow Section 12 of this procedure.
- 6.3** School Administrators shall review school-wide attendance reports on a monthly basis (at a minimum), to identify students with habitual absenteeism or lateness that is having a negative impact on student achievement and subsequently follow Section 12 of this procedure.
- 6.4** Principals shall communicate the process for attendance recording, verification and reporting to staff, students, and parents on an annual basis (e.g., through staff handbooks, student handbooks and newsletters, etc.).



- 6.5** Principals shall report to the School Attendance Counsellor the names of any compulsory school age student who has 15 unexcused consecutive absences and continue to notify the School Attendance Counsellor every 15 days thereafter. Principal and Attendance Counselor will document attendance cases such as these using the 30-45-60 Days of Consecutive Absence form (Form 3).
- 6.6** Principals shall report to the School Attendance Counsellor and school supervisory officer the names, ages and residences of all compulsory school-aged students who are not attending school as required by law.

7.0 Child Subject to Society Care or Supervision

Elementary School (Ed. Act 47 (1))

A child who is under the care or supervision of a children's aid society, receives child protection services from a children's aid society or resides in a children's residence or foster home within the meaning of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, and who is otherwise qualified to be admitted to an elementary school, shall be admitted without the payment of a fee to an elementary school operated by the board of the school section or separate school zone, as the case may be, in which the child resides.

Secondary School (Ed. Act 47 (2))

A child who is under the care or supervision of a children's aid society, receives child protection services from a children's aid society or resides in a children's residence or foster home within the meaning of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017*, and who is otherwise qualified to be admitted to a secondary school, shall be admitted without the payment of a fee to a secondary school operated by the board of the secondary school district or separate school zone, as the case may be, in which the child resides.

8.0 Excused from Mandatory Attendance

A person is excused from attendance at school if:

- a) the person is receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere;
- b) the person is unable to attend school by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause supported by official documentation;
- c) transportation is not provided by a board for the person and there is no school that he or she has a right to attend situated,
 - i. within 1.6 kilometres from the person's residence measured by the nearest road if he or she has not attained the age of seven years on or before the first school day in September in the year in question, or
 - ii. within 3.2 kilometres from the person's residence measured by the nearest road if he or she has attained the age of seven years but not the age of 10 years on or before the first school day in September in the year in question,
 - iii. within 4.8 kilometres from the person's residence measured by the nearest road if he or she has attained the age of 10 years on or before the first school day in September in the year in question;
- d) the person has obtained a secondary school graduation diploma or has completed a course that gives equivalent standing;
- e) the person is absent from school for the purpose of receiving instruction in music and the period of absence does not exceed one-half day in any week;
- f) the person is suspended, expelled, or excluded from attendance at school under any Act or under the regulations;
- g) the person is absent on a day regarded as a holy day by the church or religious denomination to which he or she belongs; or
- h) the person is absent or excused as authorized under this Act and the regulations.



9.0 Restrictions of School Attendance

School attendance may only be restricted by the imposition of a modified day or exclusion in accordance with the Education Act and its regulations and where all other possibilities have been considered. The restriction must be temporary and in accordance with the following processes.

9.1 The following outlines the limited and temporary circumstances under which a school administrator may consider imposing a restriction on a pupil's right to attend school full-time. Students of compulsory school age, must receive instruction for a minimum of five (5) hours per day, excluding recesses or scheduled intervals between classes.

9.2 There are a limited number of exceptions to compulsory full-time attendance, including where a pupil has been suspended or expelled, or is receiving home schooling.

9.3 The Education Act also allows for a school principal to temporarily excuse a pupil from full-time attendance "at the written request of a parent of the pupil or the pupil where the pupil is an adult." Any parent may make such a request, for example, where their child is transferring into a new class or school, and the parent believes that the pupil would be more comfortable with a gradual entry. The Education Act provides for two further exceptions to mandatory full-time school attendance:

9.4 **Modified Day** - It is a contravention of the *Education Act* and regulations made thereunder to reduce the length of school day of any pupil except where a temporarily modified day is requested in writing by the pupil's parent, or where the pupil is an exceptional pupil receiving a special education program, and a modified day is an appropriate accommodation of the student's disability-related needs.

9.4.1 The Board may only modify the length of the instructional day to less than five hours where a pupil has been identified and an exceptional pupil and placed in a special education program by an IPRC.

(a) An "exceptional pupil" is defined under the *Education Act* as a pupil "whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program by a committee..."¹ where "committee" refers to an Identification and Placement Review Committee ("IPRC").

(b) A "special education program" is defined under the *Education Act* as a program for an exceptional pupil.

9.4.2 Approval for using a modified day as an accommodation for an exceptional pupil in a special education program, must be obtained from the Superintendent of Special Education. Prior to the Superintendent of Special Education considering a request for approval, the school administrator will have considered the student's learning profile, parental input, and whether any other supports would be sufficient to accommodate the student's needs. The school team including system special education staff will contemplate whether:

- a) an IPRC is appropriate for the pupil;
- b) any other changes to the pupil's IEP are necessary;
- c) appropriate strategies and programming are in place;
- d) the appropriate Special Education and/or Student Support Services personnel could assist with strategies to facilitate full day attendance;
- e) there are any additional resources that could assist the pupil to maintain full day attendance;
- f) the pupil would benefit from a modified day;
- g) the pupil can access remote learning opportunities to augment their program;
- h) all other possibilities have been carefully considered and deemed insufficient to meet the pupil's needs; and
- i) the suggested timeline for transitioning the student to full day instruction as soon as possible is appropriate.

9.4.3 A school administrator who has determined that a modified day is an appropriate accommodation shall complete a copy of the attached "Request for Modified Day" form (Form 4), to be submitted to the Superintendent of Special Education and Superintendent for the family of schools.



9.4.4 The Superintendent of Special Education shall consider the request and if approved return a signed copy of the form to the school administrator, indicating a date at which the need for a modified day shall be reviewed.

9.4.5 The signed copy of the form shall be stored in the student's OSR.

9.4.6 The student's IEP will be updated, and a copy provided to the parent/guardian.

9.4.7 If applicable, the school administrator will coordinate the student's revised schedule with Student Transportation Services.

9.4.8 The school administrator will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them of the Superintendent's decision and to discuss the implementation of the modified day plan, including if applicable any transportation implications, and any changes to the pupil's IEP.

9.4.9 The school administrator shall consult regularly with the pupil's teacher and other support providers to monitor the effectiveness of a modified day as an accommodation, and for the purpose of determining the earliest possible opportunity to increase the student's instructional day.

9.4.10 The school administrator shall inform the Superintendent of Special Education of the date of the student's return to full-time attendance and record the return date on the Request form.

Using Non-Instructional Days ("N") to Record Attendance for Modified Days

- "N" days are full days, mornings, or afternoons in the school calendar for which individual pupils are not scheduled for in-school instruction. "N" day are not regular days of absence ("A") nor are they "G" days.
- "N" is to be used for pupils who are not scheduled for classes on specific full days, mornings, afternoons similar to how it would be recorded for a student enrolled in an Intensive Behaviour Intervention Program.

9.5 **Exclusion** - Exclusion of a pupil is a measure to be used only as a last result. Under the *Education Act*, it is a duty of a principal to *"refuse to admit to the school or classroom a person whose presence in the school or classroom would in the principal's judgment be detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of the pupils"*.

9.5.1 Exclusion is not available as an accommodation of a pupil's disability-related needs and may not be used as a disciplinary measure. A pupil can only be excluded from either a classroom or a school on the grounds that the pupil's continued presence would pose a risk to the physical or mental well-being of other pupils.

9.5.2 The school will continue to provide educational and other services to a pupil during the period when they are prohibited from attending school.

9.5.3 Under the Education Act, a parent may appeal a principal's decision to exclude a pupil to the Board of Trustees.

9.5.4 Before excluding a pupil, a school administrator shall consult with the Family of Schools Superintendent of Education, and/or the Superintendent of Special Education. Prior to consulting with the Superintendent, a school administrator will have:

- a) considered the pupil's learning and behaviour profile;
- b) discussed the pupil's strengths, needs and available supports with the appropriate internal and external service providers;
- c) reviewed whether there are any additional resources that could assist the pupil to maintain safe attendance;
- d) considered how best to provide the pupil with educational services during the period of exclusion;
- e) considered temporary remote learning opportunities to augment programming;
- f) developed a plan which clearly reflects that the exclusion is temporary and includes a strategy and timeline for resuming attendance; and



- g) the Board cannot identify any further means of facilitating a pupil's continued attendance that would allow for a safe school learning environment for students,

9.5.5 The Principal shall complete the Consideration of Exclusion form (Form 5) and forward a copy to the Family of Schools Superintendent, with a request for consultation on the exclusion of a pupil.

9.5.6 The Superintendent will review the Consideration of Exclusion form and consider whether all other alternatives besides exclusion have been explored, as well as the school administrator's plans for:

- a) providing ongoing education services to the pupil while they are excluded; and
- b) the measures to be taken while the pupil is excluded to facilitate their re-entry.

9.5.6 Following consultation with the Superintendent, the school administrator determines that a pupil must be excluded, the school administrator or Superintendent will verbally convey this information to the pupil's parent. A letter (Appendix B) formally notifying the parent of the exclusion will be reviewed by the Superintendent and signed by the school administrator, and shall include:

- a) reference to section 265(1)(m) of the *Education Act*;
- b) a description of the behaviour putting the student and/or other students' safety at risk;
- c) steps that will be taken to facilitate the student's safe and successful return to school during the absence;
- d) the right to appeal, the process to appeal (Appendix C) to the Board of Trustees and contact information for whom the notice of intent to appeal is to be delivered; and
- e) details of the ongoing education to be provided during the period of the exclusion.

9.5.7 The school administrator shall facilitate a pupil's return at the earliest opportunity, consulting regularly with the pupil's parent and support providers to develop a re-entry plan.

9.5.8 The Superintendent shall ensure that the school administrator is actively pursuing effective strategies to facilitate the pupil's safe return to school. The school administrator shall inform the Superintendent of the re-entry plan and the date of the student's return to full-time attendance.

10.0 Jurisdiction and Responsibility of Attendance Counsellors

10.1 A School attendance counsellor appointed by a board has jurisdiction and is responsible for the enforcement of compulsory school attendance in respect of every child who is required to attend school.

10.2 Upon request by the school principal, the School Attendance Counsellor shall assist with developing strategies and supports for students with irregular attendance as identified in this procedure.

10.3 Upon notification by a principal that a student is failing to attend school, the School Attendance Counsellor shall contact the parent/guardian to address school concerns.

10.4 If after several attempts to re-engage students are unsuccessful, the School Attendance Counsellor in consultation with the Superintendent may bring the student to the Attendance Review Committee. The School Attendance Counsellor may also consult with the Provincial Attendance Counsellor.

10.5 The Attendance Review Committee meeting may recommend proceeding with charges under the Education Act (for students ages 12-15 and parents of children under the age of 16).

11.0 Consecutive Unexcused Absences 15 – 30 – 45 – 60 Days (Form 3)

11.1 The School Attendance Counsellor, upon receipt of written referral for a student of compulsory school age with 11-15 unexplained consecutive absences from school shall make contact with the parent or guardian regarding the reasons for the absenteeism and provide support for the family to re-engage the student in an approved educational program under the Education Act. The School Attendance Counsellor shall



update the principal in writing at 15 day intervals, with respect to the progress of the student regarding attendance and/or the involvement of community partners assisting in addressing factors which may be contributing to poor attendance. Principals must consult the most current *Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools* when determining whether a specific student can remain on roll.

- 11.2 If the Attendance Counsellor is unsuccessful in their attempts to communicate with the pupil or pupil's parents/guardians, then the pupil shall be removed from the register. After the pupil has been removed from the register the principal must still attempt to contact the pupil and/or the pupil's parent/or guardian. If the principal is unsuccessful it is the obligation of the board to contact social agencies or the police to establish if there is any knowledge of the pupil's whereabouts or to confirm a change of address for the pupil.
- 11.3 If after several attempts to re-engage students are unsuccessful, the School Attendance Counsellor in consultation with the Superintendent may bring the student to the Attendance Review Committee. The School Attendance Counsellor may also consult with the Provincial Attendance Counsellor.
- 11.4 The Attendance Review Committee meeting may recommend proceeding with charges under the Education Act (for students ages 12-15 and parents of children under the age of 16). If proceeding with charges, the School Attendance Counsellor shall give written notice to the parent or guardian for the student to attend and shall advise the parent or guardian, in writing, of the provisions of subsection 24 (2). R.S.O. 1990, c.E.2, s. 26 (4).

12.0 Guidelines of Supports for Students and Families

- 12.0 Problematic Attendance Impacting Student Achievement - Supports and Interventions
In the instance where a student has more than five absences or is habitually late and/or the student's attendance is having a substantively negative impact on student achievement, the Principal shall establish strategies to improve student attendance and shall consider the following approaches:

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|-------------------|--|
| Step One | Teacher to contact parent/guardian, or adult student (where appropriate) to identify the reasons for the irregular attendance or punctuality, to collaborate on strategies and supports to improve attendance, to implement the strategies, and to follow up on the success of the strategies in a timely fashion. |
| Step Two | If attendance does not improve sufficiently, the teacher may need to implement progressive discipline measure to correct the behaviour. If attendance does not improve the teacher will notify the principal. |
| Step Three | If attendance has not improved sufficiently as deemed by the principal, the principal or designate will consult with the school Attendance Counsellor, meet with the parent/guardian or student (where appropriate) and other school staff to identify the reasons for the irregular attendance or punctuality, to collaborate on strategies to improve attendance, to implement the strategies and to follow up on the success of the strategies in a timely fashion. |
| Step Four | If attendance has not improved sufficiently as deemed by the principal, a letter shall be sent home and a second meeting is to be set up with the parents and/or student where appropriate and would include the Attendance Counsellor. |
| Step Five | If attendance has not improved sufficiently as deemed by the principal, he/she will continue to refer the student to the School Attendance Counsellor. |

13.0 Approved Extended Absences

- 13.0 Although not encouraged, families may need for various reasons, to request an extended period of consecutive absences for their child(ren).



- 13.1 For planned consecutive absences up to 14 days, a Student Extended Absence Request form (Form 1) will be used, and the absence will be recorded as a General Absence using 'G' code during that time.
- 13.2 For planned consecutive absences of 15 days or more, an alternative program of study must be approved by the Principal. The Intent to be Absent form (Form 6) will be used.
 - a) If the student has an approved alternative program of study, the school can record as General Absence 'G' for the dates specified on the form and beyond the 15th day.
 - b) If the student does not have an approved alternative program of study the school will record as an Absence using 'A' code the 15th day and beyond.
 - c) A copy of this form will be forwarded to the Attendance Counsellor (only for compulsory school aged students) should the student not return on the Return to School Date indicated, and the absence will be recorded as an Absence using 'A' code. The 15 day absence rule will begin to apply on the first date of non-attendance after the indicated return to school date.
- 13.4 Absences that were initially approved through the Student Extended Absence Request process that surpass 14 consecutive days must be reported as an Absence 'A' from the 15th day forward. The school must contact the parent/guardian in this situation to determine next steps.

14.0 Truancy and Habitual Neglect of Duty

In the instance where a student is truant or demonstrates a habitual neglect of their duty to attend school punctually and regularly, they may, at the discretion of the Principal, be subject to progressive discipline as set out in Board policy.

15.0 Alternative Course or Program

Where the pupil has clearly demonstrated to the principal that the pupil is not competent to undertake a particular course or program of studies, the pupil may take a prerequisite course, or select with the approval of the principal and the parent/guardian where applicable, an appropriate alternative course or program offered by the Board.