

FINAL

November 28, 2001

**ADOPT A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ON ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY**

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING DECISION:**

**DESCRIPTION:**

Adopt a Comprehensive Policy on Absenteeism and Truancy and Rescind the "Mandatory Student Attendance Improvement Policy," 96-0925-P01, as follows:

**POLICY**

**I. DEFINITIONS**

As used in this policy, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

1. "Valid Cause For Absence" shall mean:

- (i) illness;
- (ii) observance of a religious holiday;
- (iii) death in the immediate family;
- (iv) family emergency;
- (v) circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent or legal guardian for the safety or health of the student;
- (vi) other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the principal, or principal's designee, on a case-by-case basis, including, but not limited to, homelessness and its attendant difficulties.

2. "Excused Absence" shall mean an absence for which there is a valid cause either:

- (i) known to the principal or principal's designee; or
- (ii) attested by a letter (or note) signed by the parent or legal guardian setting forth such cause and approved by the principal or the principal's designee either before or after the date of the absence.

3. "Unexcused Absence" shall mean: an absence for which there is no valid cause either:

- (i) known to the principal or principal's designee; or
- (ii) attested by a letter (or note) signed by the parent or legal guardian setting forth such cause and approved by the principal or the principal's designee either before or after the date of the absence.

4. "Immediate Family" shall mean: parents, legal guardians, spouse, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts and uncles.

5. "Truant" shall mean: a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for a school day or portion thereof.

6. "Chronic Truant" shall mean: a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent from such attendance without valid cause for 10% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

## **II. ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT**

### **A. SCHOOL-BASED INITIATIVES**

All schools whose overall attendance rate is below 95% shall develop an "Attendance Improvement Plan" ("Plan") to be implemented during the next school year. The Plan shall be included in, and made a part of, the school's School Improvement Plan for Advancing Academic Achievement for the next school year. The goals of the Plan shall be to:

reduce the number of student absences;  
increase student academic achievement;  
reduce the number of chronic truants/potential dropouts; and  
increase parental and community involvement in these objectives.

The Plan may identify improved curriculum, expanded vocational educational programs, increased extracurricular activities, appropriate services to address the needs of homeless students, and other systemic changes to achieve the goals of the Plan. Principals are to refer to the Student Attendance Improvement Plan information guidelines, available from the Department of Attendance Improvement, for the development of their Student Attendance Improvement Plans, the identification of personnel to implement the plans, and the annual evaluation of the Plan. Attendance Improvement Plans may also incorporate references to the initiatives set forth in Parts II through V of this policy.

### **B. SYSTEM-WIDE INITIATIVES:**

The Board shall implement system-wide initiatives to support the schools' Student Attendance Improvement Plans. Such initiatives shall include the following:

- 1. COMPUTERIZED ATTENDANCE:** All schools have the capability to report daily attendance on the CPS mainframe computer. Attendance shall be reported daily and monitored centrally.
- 2. ABSENTEE OUTCALLING SYSTEM:** The Absentee Outcalling System is an automated telephone system which may be programmed to call the home telephone numbers of absent students or other telephone numbers submitted by the student's parent(s) or guardian(s). A supplemental postcard mailing system may also be established to notify homes without telephones and homes that cannot be reached by the Absentee Outcalling System.
- 3. TRUANCY HOTLINE:** The Board has established a Truancy Hotline (773/553-4000) to give individual citizens and businesses a convenient means of reporting school-aged students who are on the streets or at home during school hours, 24 hours a day. The hotline shall forward this information to central office for processing.
- 4. HOMELESS EDUCATION LIAISONS:** Homeless Education Liaisons in each of the CPS regions and each school shall assist in identifying and serving the needs of homeless students that may adversely affect their attendance.
- 5. STUDENT ATTENDANCE AUDITS:** Schools shall be subject to audit to determine whether they are in compliance with their Attendance Improvement Plans and are accurately reporting student attendance.

### **III. DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES**

In order to identify and address the cause(s) of unexcused absenteeism, a principal shall, as necessary: interview the student; meet with his or her parent(s) or guardian(s); meet with other Board officials or employees, including Region and School Homeless Education Liaisons, or other parties who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem. Schools may employ a variety of means to identify truant and chronically truant students and students at risk of becoming truant or chronically truant students, including, but not limited to, the School Police Patrol, the Parent Patrol, the Parent Partnering Program, and the Truancy Hotline.

### **IV. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

School may make available a variety of supportive services to students identified as at risk of becoming truants or chronic truants, including, but not limited to, Early Childhood Cradle-to-Classroom and Truancy Outreach Programs ("TOPS"). Except for violations which subject the student to the possibility of expulsion, schools may also impose sanctions other than out-of-school suspensions to address violations of the Uniform Discipline Code by students at risk of becoming truants or chronic truants. Those sanctions may include: in-school detention; before- or after-school detention; Saturday detention; before- or after-school service; student peer juries and truancy violation/prevention workshops.

Schools shall make the following supportive services available to truant or chronically truant students and/or their parents, as appropriate:

- (i) parent conferences;
- (ii) student counseling;
- (iii) family counseling and other social services;
- (iv) information about existing community services which are available to truant and chronically truant students and relevant to their needs;
- (v) intensive academic remediation, including, but not limited to, the summer bridge program;
- (vi) the Early School Leavers Program (a work/study program open to formerly truant high school students between the ages of 16 to 21 years who wish to complete their education);
- (vii) informing students and their parents of the enrollment rights of homeless students and the transportation services that may be available to assist homeless students in attending school.

Except for violations which subject the student to the possibility of expulsion, schools may also impose sanctions other than out-of-school suspensions to address violations of the Uniform Discipline Code by truant or chronically truant students. Those sanctions may include: in-school detention; before- or after-school detention; Saturday detention; before- or after-school service; student peer juries and truancy/ violation prevention workshops.

### **V. INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION**

To assist the efforts of the Chicago Public Schools to improve school attendance rates and reduce truancy and chronic truancy rates, the Board and its schools may, as appropriate, request the assistance and cooperation of other governmental agencies, including: the Chicago Housing Authority (by including provisions in its leases requiring regular school attendance by school-age students); the Illinois Department of Public Aid (by redirecting to social service agencies, or withholding a portion of, the

assistance it provides to parents of truant students, as allowed by statute); the Office of the State's Attorney of Cook County and the Circuit Court of Cook County, Juvenile Division (by requesting the expedited processing of truants on probation and the prosecution of chronic truants and their parents or legal guardians, as appropriate, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/34-4.5); and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (by ensuring that its wards attend school regularly). The Board shall explore, and implement to the greatest extent feasible, opportunities for such interagency collaboration.

**VI. CHRONIC TRUANCY ADJUDICATION**

Pursuant to Section 34-4.5 of the Illinois School Code, 105 ILCS 5/34-4.5, there is hereby established within the Board of Education a Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication, which shall be responsible for administratively adjudicating cases of chronic truancy and imposing appropriate sanctions. Also pursuant to Section 34-4.5, the Board shall appoint and employ hearing officers to perform the adjudicatory functions of the Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication. Principals and other appropriate personnel may refer students suspected of being chronic truants, as defined in this policy, to the Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication. The Department of Chronic Truant Adjudication shall adopt and disseminate, as appropriate, procedures to fulfill the requirements of Section 34-4.5.

Amends/Rescinds: Rescinds 96-0925-PO1, "Mandatory Student Attendance Improvement Policy."  
Cross References: 81-114-7; 81-201-2; 83-216-26; 83-216-27; 84-0411-ED7; 84-0718-RS3; 85-0925-ED5; 88-0309-ED7; 88-1026-E13; 89-0222-PO1; 90-0716-RS3; 95-0222-RS3; 94-0323-PO1; 96-0327-PO1; 96-0828-PO3; 96-0828-PO4; 96-1120-PO3  
Legal References: 105 ILCS 5/26-2a; 105 ILCS 5/26-13; 23 Ill. Admin. Code §1.290; 105 ILCS 5/34-4.5; 105 ILCS 45/1-1 et seq.

**LSC REVIEW:** Not Applicable.

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STATUS:** Not applicable.

**FINANCIAL:** No additional cost to the Board.

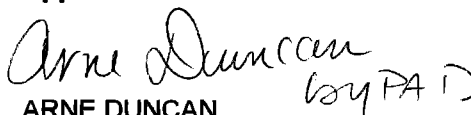
**PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS:** Within budget appropriations.

**Approved for Consideration:**



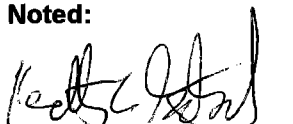
BARBARA J. EASON-WATKINS  
Chief Education Officer

**Approved:**

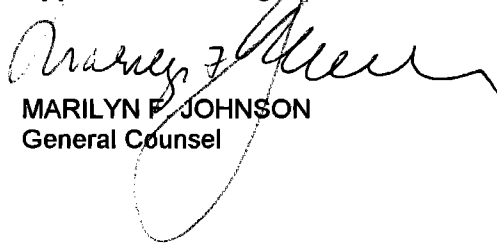
  
by PA 11

ARNE DUNCAN  
Chief Executive Officer

**Noted:**

  
KENNETH C. GOTSCH  
Chief Fiscal Officer

**Approved as to Legal Form:**



MARILYN F. JOHNSON  
General Counsel