

John Greer Attendance Program

Rationale:

In the 21st Century, a quality education is the essential foundation to success in life. Student attendance is generally related to success in school. Therefore, it is critically important that students attend school every day. Educators understand that students get flu and fever and have medical appointments from time to time. However, state law requires that a student attend school 95% of the school days each year. In order to promote 95% attendance, the *John Greer Attendance Program* has been established.

Procedure:

During the last week of every month (beginning in September), attendance data is analyzed in the John Greer Office. This data is used to create the following *John Greer Attendance Program*.

Classroom Attendance:

At the end of each month, an InfoNow Report will be generated to determine which homeroom class at each grade level has the greatest attendance percentage for the month. The following month, that homeroom class at each grade level will be the first class to go through the lunch line. However, to continue earning that privilege during the month, the homeroom class will need to follow the recess expectation of a straight and silent line. In addition, the homeroom at each grade level with the best monthly attendance will be awarded a ribbon.

Individual Attendance (95% Attendance Club):

At the end of each month, students who have a school year cumulative attendance record of 95% or better, will be considered members of the 95% Attendance Club. For the purpose of this Club, only total absences will be considered and no differentiation will be made between excused or unexcused absences. Every month, 95% Attendance Club members will:

- Have their name posted publically
- Receive a Certificate of Attendance
- Receive a free lunch treat coupon.

Perfect Attendance:

At the end of each month, students who have had perfect attendance for the month will be rewarded with a special treat. Effort will be made to provide a different treat each month. In addition, students with perfect attendance for the year will be recognized at the end of the year and have the opportunity to participate in a special event on Fun Day.

John Greer Student Handbook Attendance Policies:

After reviewing monthly attendance data, the *John Greer Student Handbook Attendance Policy* is enforced. The *John Greer Student Handbook Attendance Policy* has been reviewed by the Vermilion County Truancy Officer and has been found to be legally sound. In typical situations where absences become excessive or unusual, the following steps are followed:

- Parents receive notification letters
- Parents are required to produce a doctor's note to excuse every absence.
- Students are referred to the Vermilion County Truancy Officer.
 - Parents receive notification from the Vermilion County Truancy Officer.
 - Parents may be required to attend a mandatory meeting with the Vermilion County Truancy Officer and the John Greer Principal.
 - The Vermilion County Truancy Officer may conduct a visit to the home.
- The case is forwarded to the Vermilion County State's Attorney.

Excerpts from Illinois Attendance Law

It is essential that students attend school consistently and regularly to ensure that they have the best school experience possible, both academically and socially. For the purpose of understanding Illinois Attendance Law, the following excerpts are provided directly from the *Illinois School Law Survey*, Twelfth Edition.

What is a truant?

A truant is a child subject to compulsory school attendance who is absent from school without valid cause for a school day or any portion of a school day.

What student absences are permitted by law?

The School Code provides the valid causes for absence are illness, observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency, and includes such other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the board of education in each district, or such other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the safety or health of the student. "Religion" for the purposes of truancy law, includes all aspects of religious observance and practice, as well as belief.

What duty does a school district have to notify parents of a student absence?

If a child in grades K-8 is absent from school, and there is no record the absence is for a valid cause and there is no notification the absence has been authorized, the school must, within two hours after the first class in which the child is enrolled, make a reasonable effort to telephone and notify the parent, legal guardian, or other person having legal custody of the child of the child's absence from school.

What is the penalty for encouraging truancy?

Any person who has custody or control of a child subject to compulsory attendance who knowingly or willfully permits the child to persist in truancy, if convicted, is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor and may be subject to up to 30 days imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$1500. Any person who willfully induces or attempts to induce any child to be absent from school or who knowingly employs or harbors any child who is unlawfully absent from school for three consecutive school days, if convicted, is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor. Any person who prevents or interferes with a child's attendance at school by threat, menace or intimidation is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor. A Class A misdemeanor is punishable by imprisonment for a term up to a year and a fine not to exceed \$2500. In any such proceeding against parents or guardians the school district must demonstrate it has attempted to counsel the student and the person(s) having custody and control of the student and has provided support services, alternative programs and other school resources in an effort to correct the truant behavior.

Who has jurisdiction to act with respect to truant minors?

Under given circumstances a school district, the school district truant officer, the regional superintendent of schools, the state's attorney and/or the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services may have jurisdiction.

What is a chronic or habitual truant?

A chronic or habitual truant is a child subject to compulsory attendance laws who is absent without valid cause from school for 5 percent or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

What restrictions are placed on a school district in dealing with a chronic or habitual truant?

Compulsory attendance laws provide a school district may take no punitive action against a chronic or habitual truant for truancy until the district has made available to the student all support services and other school resources in order to correct the chronic or habitually truant behavior.

Comments from Hoopeston Area Schools

Please note the following points:

- A student is considered a chronic truant “who is absent without valid cause from school for 5 percent or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days”.
- Truancy is based on 180 enrollment days. The counting period for truancy does not start over at the beginning of the new school year.
- The phrase “without valid cause” refers to *unexcused absences*.
- Student Handbooks at each Hoopeston Area School specify what constitutes an excused absence and what constitutes an *unexcused absence*.
- Hoopeston Area Administrators have agreed to the following consistent practices for the 2013 – 2014 school year if a student accumulates the stated number of *unexcused absences*.
 - 1 3 Unexcused Absences – Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will receive a letter alerting them that their student has been absent without valid cause 3 times.
 - 2 5 Unexcused Absences – Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will receive a phone call and/or letter that includes an invitation to a problem-solving meeting with Hoopeston’s Community Liaison and the building principal.
 - 3 9 Unexcused Absences – Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will receive a phone call and/or letter that informs them that their student has been referred to the Vermilion County Truancy Officer for further action.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Notify Hoopeston Area Schools every day that your child is absent. Please consult the Student Handbook to determine how to properly notify the school office when your child is absent.
- Provide documentation of your child’s absence. Have a doctor and/or counselor document any such appointments with an official note. These notes can be sent with your child or faxed by the doctor/counselor and are kept as proof that your child’s absence was excused.



Thank you for your continued support!