BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE CODE F5RP: STUDENT ATTENDANCE (2023-2024)

Summary

Burlington School District has updated our District Attendance Procedures to be aligned with our attendance policy and VT State Statutes. The biggest change, implemented in the 23/24 school year, involves clarification around excused and unexcused absences and how we handle truancy (students missing five or more days of school in one school year).

2023-24 Attendance Procedures

In all schools, teachers will take attendance for every student, daily. There will be **no default blank value accepted** for attendance. Staff members taking attendance will use one of the codes in the table below for all students. Attendance must be updated and corrected as needed in PowerSchool for the entire week before Monday of the following week.

Attendance Taking Tools

In PreK, teachers will take attendance for all students in PowerTeacher by the end of the school day. Partner PreK programs will use a spreadsheet system to take care of attendance.

In Grades K-5, teachers will take attendance for all students in PowerTeacher no later than 20 minutes after the start of the school day. Administrative assistants will verify that this is completed no later than 45 minutes after the start of the

school day. If attendance is not complete for all students, administrative assistants will follow up with teachers to ensure it is completed.

In Grades 6-8, teachers will take attendance for all students in Schoology no later than 10 minutes after the start of the school day. Administrative assistants will verify that it is completed no later than one hour after the start of the school day. For subsequent classes, attendance must be taken prior to the end of each class. If attendance is not complete for all students, administrative assistants will follow up with teachers to ensure it is completed.

For grades K-8, if a student is absent and we have no communication from the family, the school will make contact through a phone call to the family that day.

In Grades 9-12, teachers are expected to get attendance into Schoology or Powerteacher by the conclusion of each class meeting, each day. The administrative assistant responsible for attendance at each building will verify that attendance has been taken for all students daily. Student attendance is converted to daily attendance in PowerSchool by the BHS Attendance staff person. It is essential that teachers keep accurate and updated attendance records.

If a Grade 9-12 student is marked as "Absent Unexcused (AU)" for one or more classes (does not include flex and choice times, see attendance codes section), an automatically generated phone call (robocall) will go to their family at one or both of two times, depending on which block(s) were missed - 12:00pm and/or 2:45pm. The call says something to this effect: "You are receiving this call because you have at least one student who has missed at least one class this morning (12pm) or this afternoon (2:45pm)."

Impact on Afterschool Participation
In all cases where the attendance code entered is SNE, EdU, EdA, or AE, the student will be allowed to participate in all and any after school activities, including athletic practices and events, school dances, and field trips.

Attendance Comments for Health-related Absences
In the case of anything health or medical-related, even a routine appointment, "Health-related absence" should be entered. PowerSchool will not be used to document any specific health or medical information. Health and medical information is confidential and goes to the school nurse to be documented and shared with appropriate parties. School nurses will maintain lists of information on health-related absences in a standard format provided by the Lead Nurse, including covid-related absences. All comments must include the author's initials and date for future reference, e.g. "Health-related absence JD 11.4.22".

Planned Absences
For students with a planned absence of three to nine days, families submit this form alerting us to these planned absences. They will be marked as AE.

For students with a planned absence of 10 or more days, the family must complete the following form. These students will be unenrolled and can re-enroll upon their return.

For students who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences and who have not yet enrolled or are not enrolling elsewhere, we mark them as AU, with comments that explain what we know about why that student is absent.

Attendance Codes

Daily Attendance Codes

Category	Code	Name	Description	Note
Absent	AE	Absent Excused	Student was expected to be physically present at school but was absent due to one of the four excused reasons: ● Personal illness	Use the RH code for the fourth excused reason, religious holiday

Category	Code	Name	Description	Note
			• Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside of the regular school day • Emergency family situations (such as a death in the family)	
Absent	AC	Absent with Contact	Student was absent and the family did contact us to let us know, but it was not for one of the four excused reasons.	For vacations, use the Vacation code
Absent	AU	Absent Unexcused	Student was expected to be physically present at school but was absent (other than Excused Absences as listed) and the family did not contact us on or before the day of the absence. Changed in 23/24	
Absent	EdA	Alternate Education Program – Approved	Student was in a state-approved, non-BSD education program.	
Absent	EdU	Alternate Education Program – Unapproved	Student was in an alternate education program that is not state-approved.	Crow's Path and similar go here! Homeschool students who are not yet state-approved go here!
Absent	RH	Religious Holiday	Observance of recognized religious holidays when the observance is required during a regular school day.	
Absent	V	Vacation	Family calls to let us know that the student will be visiting family, taking a trip, or otherwise taking a day off from school for fun/by choice. Changed in 23/24 to Absent from AE.	Teacher encouraged to add note on what the student is doing in the absence of schooling
Present	P	Present	Student was in school for the whole day (or, for part-time students, 100% of their scheduled time).	
Present	TE	Tardy Excused	Student was late to school for an excused reason.	
Present	TU	Tardy Unexcused	Student was late to school without an excused reason.	
Present	ED	Early Dismissal	Student left school early for an excused reason.	
Present	EDR	Early Dismissal / Return	Student left school early for an excused reason and returned.	
Present	TED	Tardy Early Dismissal	Student was late to school and dismissed early.	
School-Related	SE	Sporting Event	Student was participating in a school-sanctioned sporting event or academic event.	
School-Related	FT	Field Trip		
School-Related	ISS	In-School Suspension	Student spent four or more hours in "In School Suspension."	

Category	Code	Name	Description	Note
School-Related	OSS	Out of School Suspension	Student spent four or more hours in "Out of School Suspension."	
School-Related	ISSH	Half-Day In-School Suspension	Student spent less than four hours "In-School Suspension."	
School-Related	OSSH	Half-Day Out of School Suspension	Student spent less than four hours in "Out of School Suspension."	
Not Expected	SNE	Student Not Expected	Part-time student not expected in school on this day. Or, days when part of a school is not running (e.g. Preschool does not run on Wednesday)	

Meeting Attendance Codes

Category	Code	Name	Teachers can use?	Description	Note
In Class	P	Present	Yes	Student was physically present for the whole class.	
In Class	ED	Early Dismissal	No	Student was present in class, but left before the end of class for an excused reason.	
In Class	T	Tardy	Yes	Student was late to class.	
In Class	TX	Tardy – Extended	Yes	Student arrived over 20 minutes late and missed major content, without parental permission and/or without a note from administration excusing the time.	
In Class	LC	Left Class	Yes	Student was unaccounted for for more 20% of the time allotted for the block, without parental permission and/or an administrative note excusing the time.	
School-Related	LSN	Out of class Lesson	No	Student was not in class for a school-related, educational reason (e.g. a band lesson).	
School-Related	OFF	Office	No	Student was at a scheduled or approved meeting outside of class.	
School-Related	SE	Sporting Event	No	Student was participating in a school-sanctioned sporting event or academic event.	
School-Related	FT	Field Trip	No		
School-Related	ISS	In-School Suspension	No		
School-Related	OSS	Out-of-School Suspension	No		
Absent	AE	Absent Excused	No	Student was expected to be physically present in class but was absent due to one of the four excused reasons: ● Personal illness	Use the RH code for the fourth excused reason, religious holiday

Category	Code	Name	Teachers can use?	Description	Note
				• Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside of the regular school day • Emergency family situations (such as a death in the family)	
Absent	AC	Absent with Contact	No	Student was absent and the family did contact us to let us know, but it was not for one of the four excused reasons.	For vacations, use the Vacation code
Absent	AU	Absent Unexcused	Yes	Student was not in class and was unaccounted for.	
Absent	RH	Religious Holiday	No	Observance of recognized religious holidays when the observance is required during a regular school day.	
Absent	V	Vacation	No	Family calls to let us know that the student will be visiting family, taking a trip, or otherwise taking a day off from school for fun/by choice. Changed in 23/24	Teacher encouraged to add note on what the student is doing in the absence of schooling
Not Expected	SNE	Student Not Expected	No	Student is enrolled in the class but not expected to physically attend on this day	

Attendance Supports for BSD Educators
- K-12 Staff Facing How to Take Attendance
- BHS Attendance procedures for Meeting Attendance

Health-Related Absences
BSD tracks health-related absences in confidential spreadsheets accessible only by the nurse and administrative assistant who completes the attendance process.

Truancy Procedures and Truancy Letter
After five, 10, or 15 cumulative days, schools will send a restorative re-engagement letter (Truancy Letter) and make another phone call to the student's family. BSD's attendance clerk will work with schools to generate attendance letters. The clerk will run the truancy report weekly and let schools know that within three days the letters will go out. It is the responsibility of the school to run the report and to let the clerk know if there are letters that should not be sent; these reasons should be exceedingly rare.

After 15 days, where possible there should be a home visit to establish/re-establish a relationship with the student and their family to understand barriers to attending school.

Filing for Truancy
School attendance is not a priority for the courts. If school personnel feel strongly that a court intervention would make a difference for a student's health and/or well-being, they should work with their school administrator to write a clear and specific rationale for referral to the State's Attorney. Please also contact the Office of Equity about the referral request.

Mandated Reporting
All BSD staff are mandated reporters. If at any point staff experience a reasonable suspicion of neglect, they must immediately follow mandated reporter protocols. Educational neglect can only be filed for students 12 and under. For

students over 12, if there are no other reportable concerns other than absences, DCF will not accept the report of educational neglect.
- Dropout Definition for BSD, taken from here on Agency of Education (AOE) site.

Changes Beginning in the 23/24 School Year
In 23/24 BSD changed what counts as an excused absence. While this was communicated to families last Spring and in August, and is in our student handbook, now that we are a month into the school year, this reminder may be useful to families and students.
We ended the practice of accepting parental communication as the primary determinant of excusing absences and are using the guidance from the AOE regarding when an absence is considered excusable.

Excused Absences
From the AOE Website: An absence is considered excusable when it is the result of:
- Personal illness;
- Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside of the regular school day;
- Observance of recognized religious holidays when the observance is required during a regular school day;
- Emergency family situations such as a death in the family;
- Planned absences for personal or educational purposes which have been approved.
- Absences due to suspension or expulsion

All other absences will be marked as Absence Unexcused. This includes absences such as those that occur when a student needs more sleep, family is in town for a visit, the student is attending a non-AOE approved alternative programming, there is an event that the family wishes to attend with the student, participating in programs such as Crow's Path, Teresa Davis Art Studios, etc.

Planned Absences
In cases of planned absences, families must submit a Planned Absence Request Form alerting us to planned absences of three to nine days. If a planned absence will extend beyond nine consecutive days, a 10+ Days Planned Absence Request Form must be filled out by the family and signed by the principal and teachers. Unless a planned absence of three to nine days falls under one of the six types of excusable absences listed above or is otherwise approved by the Superintendent, it will be considered an unexcused absence.

Truancy
In terms of truancy, we are moving to a more restorative approach focused on understanding why a student has been absent, the impacts on their schooling, and how the school can work with the family to have improved engagement with school. A truancy notification letter will be sent to any student who has five or more absences from school whether they are excused (such as illness) or unexcused. All families will receive the truancy letter regardless of the reason for the absences. Missing multiple days of school can impact a student's academic progress including meeting State Standards and/or their IEP goals. In circumstances where a student attends outside programming one day per week, this constitutes them missing 20% of the year's curriculum and families should be aware that such absences can impact learning.

Questions and Answers for Families Regarding Changes
Q: What if a student regularly attends an alternative program determined by their family instead of going to school?
A: If a parent chooses to keep their child out of school to attend a part-time educational program (like Crow's Path, Davis Studios, etc.) the family should let the school know in writing and their child will be marked EDU (Alternate Education Program – Unapproved). As BSD cannot approve enrollment in programs unless they are taught by educators licensed by the Vermont Agency of Education, this attendance code will show up as an unexcused absence. Participation in these programs will continue to require students to make up missed work where appropriate, however, being absent for this reason will not prevent students from participating in any activities during or after school. Additionally, though families will still receive letters notifying them of their student's accumulated absences, these absences will not be factored into conversations regarding truancy with the legal system. Missing a day of school every week may impact a student's academic progress including meeting State Standards and/or their IEP goals.

Q: What should I do if a child is sick for more than three consecutive days or has 10 or more health-related absences?
A: The administrative assistant or principal should connect with the school nurse and consider asking the parent for confirmation of illnesses from the child's primary care provider (doctor).

Q: Can absences be excused?
A: Schools can excuse absences when a student is absent from school for religious, health, or emergency reasons. Excused absences are a legal part of the student's record; a student who does not attend school must be marked absent, even if the absence is excused.

Q: Do I have to contact the school if my student will not be coming to school, will be late, or needs to leave early?
A: Yes, please call the school on the day of any unplanned absence and in advance of any planned absences. Families must provide a reason for absences. For late arrivals and needing to leave school early, students who arrive after the start of the school day must check into the main office. **If your child is going to be late or absent, please call the school to let us know.** Students must remain on school grounds during school hours. Students who have parental permission to leave during the school day must be dismissed by the administrative assistant in the main office and released to the pre-approved adult unless the school has permission to allow the student to leave school on their own.

Q: Does your student want to miss school and you are not sure why?
A: Talk with them about what is happening in school. Reach out to your student's teacher or school counselor so that together you can figure out what it is the student is struggling with and whether it's for academic, social-emotional, or health-related reasons.

Q: Are there other ways schools can help families with student attendance?
A: Yes. We can:
- Set up a "contract" with your student with goals for attendance, and rewards, and consequences.
- Set up a time to talk with a teacher, school counselor, or school administrator about attendance and any concerns.
- Look at any potential counseling services or mentoring for your student.
- Consider after-school or extra-curricular programs to help keep your student interested in school.
- Look at the class schedule and see if a change could help.
- Share other resources for families. Let your school know what your family and student needs (housing, healthcare, school supplies, clothes, toiletries); we are here to help your student be comfortable coming to school and being successful!

Q: Does your student want to miss school because of school work?
A: Meet with the teacher or counselor and ask about the student's classwork. Ask about possible tutoring or homework help after school.

Questions and Answers for Staff Regarding Changes
Q: What should I type in the Attendance Comment for Health Related Absences?
A: If a student is going to be absent, you may write "Health-related Absence" in the PowerSchool attendance comment. Do not write anything specific about the student's health condition or include any medical information in the comment. This information is highly confidential. If an administrative assistant, teacher, or other staff person receives health or medical information about a student, it is the responsibility of that person to inform the parent they will share that information only with the nurse, and then share it with the nurse via email. It should not be put in PowerSchool or communicated to any other people. There is a separate confidential Health Related Absences spreadsheet for the nurse and administrative assistants to track why students are out for health reasons. This keeps private medical information intact.

Q: What should I do if a parent of a child in my classroom tells me their child is sick?
A: Any person who is not the administrative assistant or school nurse who receives this information should inform the parent that they will share it with the school nurse; they then forward that information via email to the school nurse.

BSD Version:	F5RP	

Date Adopted:	August 25, 2023
Legal Reference(s):	VSA 16.25.3
Policy Reference:	F 5R: Student Attendance
Procedural Reference	BSD Attendance and Truancy Procedures, 23-24