

Adopted: June 24, 2014

Revised: September 23, 2015 (added other consequences and alternate attendance expectation language)

October 28, 2015 (Statute reference revision; removed “voluntary withdrawal” as consequence)

July 25, 2018, July 29, 2020, March 23, 2022

## **BLUESKY CHARTER SCHOOL POLICY No. 5.2.1 ONLINE ATTENDANCE**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide the definition of “hours of instruction” and “attendance” for the purposes of compliance with state laws and to provide notice to students and families regarding BlueSky Charter School’s attendance policy.

### **II. POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of BlueSky Charter School to comply with Minn. Stat. §124E.03 subd. 6 and Minn. Stat. §120A.41 regarding the number of instructional hours that students are to receive over the course of an academic year. It is also the policy of BlueSky Charter School to ensure compliance with the compulsory instruction requirements of Minn. Stat. §120A.22.

### **III. POLICY TERMS**

- A. Hours of Instruction. BlueSky Charter School shall provide no less than the online equivalent of 1,020 hours of instruction each academic year for full time students in grades 7 - 12 and 935 hours for 1- 6th grade.
- B. Regular Attendance Requirements. Students are required to be in regular attendance for their online courses. “Regular attendance” includes continuous, active engagement with the learning process as indicated by the following:
  - 1. Attendance is measured by completed assignments submitted during the course of the school week. Every three completed assignments is the equivalent of 1 day of attendance.
  - 2. Students meeting minimum attendance will not guarantee that students stay on pace in their courses. Students need to follow individual course pace schedules to ensure that courses will be completed on time.
  - 3. For purposes of this policy, “week” is defined as 12:00 am Sunday through 11:59 pm Saturday.

- C. Course Participation. Each student must actively participate in the course activities outlined in the syllabus for each course in which they are enrolled. This could include, but is not limited to, participating in threaded discussions, responding to teacher inquiries, posting papers or engaging in other required learning activities that earn points. Course participation may be used as a means for alternate attendance expectations.
- D. Ongoing Communication. Each student must maintain regular and responsive communication with teachers and staff. This includes responding to email and text messages and/or returning calls from school faculty and staff or as indicated on student support plans or probation plans. Ongoing communications may be used as a means for alternate attendance expectations.
- E. Live Lessons. Students are required to attend live lessons including class, small group, and individual live lessons as scheduled by BlueSky teachers and support staff. They may be excused for one of the reasons listed in the attendance policy or if deemed by the teacher, IEP or 504. If a student is going to miss a live lesson the student or parent/guardian should report the absence to the attendance line at 651-202-2020 or emailing: [attendance@blueskyschool.org](mailto:attendance@blueskyschool.org). Students should participate at their level during a live lesson.
- F. Post-Secondary Educational Options. Students who are enrolled in PSEO are required to either complete their to-do list or the minimum to meet attendance for the week, whichever requirement is smaller.

#### **IV. TIME SPENT**

Fifth and sixth grade students should spend on average 5-6 hours a day, and 7-12th grade students should spend, on average, 6-7 hours of well-focused time each day, and/or consistently submit assignments that show effort, are of the student's own creation and receive points sufficient to earn a passing score. Submitting assignments that show low effort may result in an alternative attendance expectation via an academic probation plan.

#### **V. ABSENCE**

A student will be considered "absent" each time he or she fails to meet one of the attendance expectations above. In order to avoid being referred as a "continuing truant" under Minn. Stat. §260A.02 subd. 3, a student must have each absence excused by the school.

- A. A parent, guardian, or other person having control of a student may report to BlueSky Charter School to have the student excused from attendance. A report may be made up to

1 week after the absence by calling the attendance line at 651-202-2020 or emailing: [attendance@blueskyschool.org](mailto:attendance@blueskyschool.org).

B. Excused Absences. A student may be excused for:

1. Illness. Because a student in an online educational environment requires no transportation, cannot spread communicable diseases and can access classes from home, an illness or injury will be excused if it prevents the student from “regular attendance” as defined in this policy. If the school views the student’s absences as excessive it may request that a parent or guardian (or the student, if they are 18 years of age or over) to provide medical verification of the illness. A note from a licensed medical or mental health professional is a satisfactory excuse. A note is also required for 3 consecutive absences.
2. Release Time for Religious Education. A student may be excused from attendance for “religious instruction”.
  - a. The school providing “religious instruction” must be conducted and maintained in a place other than a public school building and it must not, in whole or in part, be conducted and/or maintained at public expense.
  - b. The “religious instruction” must be conducted and maintained by some church, or association of churches or any Sunday school association incorporated under the laws of this state, or any auxiliary thereof.
  - c. In order to receive approval for such release time, a parent, guardian, or other person having control of a student under the age of 18, who wishes the student to receive an excused absence to attend religious instruction, must report to the truancy officer or the Student Information Specialist to have the student’s absence excused for such instruction.
3. Extreme Family Emergencies. A student may receive an excused absence if he or she is attending a funeral for a close family member, have an immediate family member who is critically ill or injured or has another extreme family emergency such as a house fire, flood, etc. The school may request that a parent or guardian provide a written note explaining why the emergency requires an excused absence.
4. Medical Appointments. Because online classes are flexible in terms of attendance, a student may only receive an “excused” absence for a medical, dental or orthodontic appointment if the appointment will significantly interfere with the student’s ability to participate in online classes (i.e. a full-day observation, recovery from surgery, physical therapy, intensive psychiatric counseling, etc.). The school may request that a parent or guardian provide a written note explaining why the medical appointment interferes with the student’s ability to access and participate in online classes.

5. Active Duty in Any Military Branch of the United States. A student may be excused from attendance if he or she is on active duty in any military branch of the United States.
  6. Ongoing Treatment for a Mental Health Diagnosis. A student may be excused from attendance if he or she is receiving ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis provided that such treatment interferes with their ability to access and participate in online courses. Medical documentation will be required.
  7. Accommodation based on student IEP, Section 504 plan, or individual health plan.
  8. A student who missed 3 or more days may be asked for documentation for absences and/or be required to meet with their team for a student support meeting.
  9. Students may be granted 5 vacation days per year. Vacations should be discussed with the team ahead of time to create a plan for the student so they do not fall behind in their course work. The team may not approve a vacation if a student is behind in coursework. Course work is not excused when a student is on vacation.
- C. Withdrawing Students. A student who fails to log into school courses and submit at least one assignment for 15 consecutive days (regular or alternate attendance via Probation Plan) during the regular school year shall be dropped from the roll and classified as withdrawn.
- D. Other Consequences/Interventions. A student who fails to consistently meet BlueSky's attendance expectation may have consequences put in place to ensure the student is meeting all requirements of this attendance policy. Failure to comply may result in escalated consequences and/or interventions. Consequences/interventions may include but are not limited to:
1. A Student who accumulates absences may be required to participate in a student support plan.
  2. A Student who accumulates absences may be required to sign an attendance contract with the school.
  3. A Student who does not comply with the student support plan or attendance contract might be referred for Academic Probation. Academic Probation may include, but is not limited to:
    - a. Alternative attendance
      - i. Daily required attendance
      - ii. Communication check-ins
      - iii. Mandatory live lesson attendance
      - iv. Required time spent
      - v. Other interventions approved by the team
  4. A Student may be taken out of their traditional coursework and added to an attendance intervention course that takes 1-2 days to complete. The student will

have access to the team for additional support. The student may accumulate absences while enrolled in an attendance intervention course. When the student completes the intervention course, they will have a support plan meeting to resume coursework.

5. A Student may have their enrollment terminated. Open enrolled students who have disciplinary issues are disciplined in the same manner as resident students; enrollment is not revoked. (Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.41-121A.575.) A district may terminate the enrollment of a nonresident student enrolled under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.03 or section 124D.08 at the end of a year if the student meets the definition of a habitual truant under section 260C.007, subdivision 19, the student has been provided appropriate services under chapter 260A, and the student's case has been referred to juvenile court. A district may also terminate the enrollment of a nonresident student over the age of 17 enrolled under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.03 if the student is absent without lawful excuse for one or more periods on 15 school days and has not lawfully withdrawn from school under section 120A.22, subdivision 8. Minn. Stat. § 124D.03, subd. 12 Please note the student's case must be referred to the county attorney before a district may terminate enrollment. For students with disabilities, the student's IEP team should consider whether the truancy is a behavior that impedes the student's learning and if so, address the student's behavior via the IEP team process. 34 C.F.R. § 300.324(a)(2)(i)

***Legal References:*** Minn. Stat. §124E (Charter School Law)  
Minn. Stat. §120A.41 (Required Hours of Instruction)