The entire process of education requires a regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences, and study in order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefits for each child. The regular contact of the students with one another in the classroom and their participation in instructional activities under the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose. This is an established principle of education that underlies and gives purpose to the requirement of compulsory schooling in this, and every other, state in the nation. The many things that schools have to offer can only be presented to students who are in attendance. With continued emphasis regarding excellence in education, all parties involved in attendance can better strive for quality in the classroom. Attendance reflects a student’s dependability and is a significant factor on the student’s permanent record. Future employers are as much concerned about punctuality and dependability as they are about academic record. School success, scholarship, and job opportunity are greatly affected by a good attendance record.

Student attendance is now affected through the proliferation of online and virtual classroom opportunities. The Sugar Salem Board of Trustees recognizes that students have a variety of needs that may not all be met through the traditional classroom setting. Students may now take classes to fulfill Sugar Salem graduation requirements through these other settings and receive full recognition as a Sugar Salem graduate. This includes the fulfillment of all attendance requirements.

Section 33‑201, Idaho Code, states that the services of the public schools of this state are extended to any acceptable person of school age. "School Age" is defined as including all persons resident of the state, between the ages of five (5) and twenty‑one (21) years. For the purposes of this section, the age of five (5) years shall be attained when the fifth anniversary of birth occurs before the beginning of the first day of September. For a resident child who does not attend a kindergarten, school age shall be the age of six (6) if this age has been reached before the beginning of the first day of September.

Section 33‑202, Idaho Code, places the requirement for compulsory education upon the parent or guardian. The statutes also provide that school trustees shall cause proceedings to be brought against a child's parent or guardian under the provisions of the youth rehabilitation law when a parent or guardian violates the compulsory attendance law. Compulsory attendance includes students from the ages of (7) seven to (16) sixteen years of age at the time of commencement of school in his or her district.

Definitions:

1. Absent - Not being present in the classroom, more than 10 minutes late to class, or leaving class more than 10 minutes early.
2. Present - Being present in the classroom or special attendance through permission of the school principal.
3. Special Attendance - Being out of the classroom involved in a situation or activity the school board has deemed to be special attendance such as:
   1. School Sponsored Program. A field trip or special instructional clinic, etc. that is planned with written "Pre-trip instructional activities."
   2. An approved activity, tournament, or contest in which the student is selected  through an elimination process and is a direct participant.
   3. Participation of any school approved class including, but not limited to, virtual classroom activities and/or online courses provided by the Idaho Digital Learning Academy or other accredited online institution.
4. Extenuating Circumstance - Attendance that is beyond the control of the student, parent, or school.
   1. Extended illness of student
   2. Death of parent or other immediate family member
   3. Certain pre-approved family trips during school time.
5. Unverified - When a student is either absent or tardy without valid and proven reason either through the office or parent/guardian.
6. Classroom - Any station, room, or place where the student is under the supervision of the teacher or other recognized school official during the scheduled class time.
7. Tardy - Missing 1 - 10 minutes of class time at the beginning or at the end of a class period.
8. Truancy
   1. The student is in the school building but is not in attendance at a regularly scheduled class, this is without permission of the teacher or the school office.
   2. The student leaves the school building without prior approval by the parent or guardian (given by phone or written note) and without checking out through the office.
9. Appeal - If a student is to be adjudicated because of excessive absenteeism and the parent or guardian feels there are extenuating circumstances that were not considered by the school truancy committee, the parent or guardian may appeal to the Superintendent and then to the Board of Trustees.  All information presented in the hearing must be in written form with accompanying documentation. (Doctor and/or hospital records, etc.)
10. Exclusion – Changing the placement of a student (such as to the home) without denying him or her educational services.
11. Suspension – Denial of services or permission to be on school grounds for a limited period of time, or a change of placement (such as in school) for a limited period of time.
12. Expulsion – Denial, with cause, of a student in regard to all educational services and/or permission to participate in all activities. Student may not be on school grounds at any time.

A student may be denied the right to attend school if any of the following apply:

1. membership in a secret society
2. being a carrier of a contagious and/or infectious disease
3. habitually truant or excessive absences
4. incorrigible conduct which is continuously disruptive of school discipline
5. conduct which is disruptive of the instructional effectiveness of the school

The decision to deny a student the right to attend may include and result in exclusion, suspension, and/or expulsion.

Number of Days Required

All students must be in attendance in each classroom 90% of the days when that class is in session. No credit will be granted to students missing more than six (6) days per trimester. The administration shall adjudicate absences where the total number of days is greater than six (6) through doctor's excuses, legitimate illness, or other excused absences.

1. After four (4) absences, a letter will be sent, indicating the severity of the situation and explaining in detail the alternatives for non-compliance.
2. After going over the sixth (6) absence, the student will have credit withheld. That student, with parental accompaniment, must appear before the Attendance Board, consisting of the high school or junior high principal, the guidance counselor, and those teachers in whose classes the student has exceeded the allowable number of absences.
3. This Board will review the absence report to determine if the student will have credit withheld, which will occur unless extenuating circumstances surface.
4. The Attendance Board can, after hearing a student’s/parent’s appeal for retainment of credit, deny credit or put certain stipulations on a student whose credit will be dependent upon an agreement reached with the student and parents for the rest of the trimester.
5. Any decision to withhold credit can be appealed to the Superintendent and/or to the Board of Trustees.
6. If the appeal is not granted, the student may remain in that particular class period for the remainder of the trimester, be placed in study hall, or be suspended or expelled from school. If the student remains in school and disciplinary problems occur , the student will be suspended or expelled from school.
7. If the appeal is granted, the student will return to class with the Attendance Board’s stipulations. If the stipulations are violated, a loss of credit will result.
8. The Attendance Board may also decide to make decisions regarding the student’s participation in extracurricular activities.

Absences that WILL NOT be used in calculating the attendance record are

* 1. Those that occur due to school-sponsored activities, since these are considered an equivalent educational experience. These exemptions will apply to students participating in sports events, cheerleading, music related events, FFA trips, academic field trips, and others deemed co-curricular.
  2. Bereavement in the immediate family (grandmother, grandfather, father, mother, sister, brother). Any extended bereavement may be reviewed by the Attendance Board.
  3. Subpoenas to appear in court or court-ordered, out-of-district placements for special services;
  4. Work release permits as part of the annual harvest;
  5. Illness or hospitalization verified by a doctor’s statement; or
  6. Absence resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension - Students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure, or students who have been placed on short-term suspension, shall have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during time they were denied entry to the classroom.

Absences, that may be counted in the six day limit, include: family trips, work days, vacations, visiting friends or relatives, watching tournaments when not an actual participant, hair, medical, dental (without a note), photography appointments, skiing, hunting, , attending concerts, shopping, or others..

Truancy

The absence of a student from class or any portion of a class for any reason other than illness, emergency, or activities which have prior approval of the teacher or administration is to be considered an unexcused absence and, therefore, an act of truancy.

Any student who is truant will have the parent contacted and be subject to the school discipline policy. Chronic truancy will result in a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for expulsion. The prosecuting attorney will be notified for purposes of filing a complaint against the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the care of the child in a court of competent jurisdiction. Any parent or guardian of a public school pupil who is found to have knowingly allowed such pupil to become a habitual truant shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Written Excuses Must be Provided

It is recommended that before any absence, except for those which are school-sponsored or approved through administration, a written excuse should be provided. However, if not provided before the absence, it must be provided within two (2) school days following return to school; otherwise, the absence will be classified as unexcused. Parents, guardians, doctors or other responsible persons should provide documentation for all students except married or emancipated students who may speak for themselves..

A student who has been expelled for attendance violations may petition the Attendance Review Board for reinstatement. Such petition may be granted upon presentation of a firm and unequivocal commitment to maintain regular attendance.

Make Up Work

In regard to make up work, it is the student’s responsibility to notify teachers prior to being absent. In some cases teachers may require the work to be completed and turned in prior to departure. However, students will normally have the number of days missed plus one day to make up missed work.

Absences for school-sponsored activities are excused, but students are held responsible for the work missed. In order to participate in an extracurricular activity, including practice, students must be in school during the afternoon of the date of the event or in the afternoon on the last school day prior to the activity, if the activity falls on a non-school day. Exceptions may be made by the administration.

Appeal Process

If a student has lost credit due to excessive absences and the parent or guardian feels there is an extenuating circumstance, he or she may appeal to the Board of Trustees.

In reviewing written documentation during the appeal hearing, the Board of Trustees will consider the following: (1) attendance for the preceding trimester and/or year, (2) grade(s) earned in the class(es) where credit was lost and other grades, (3) made-up work completed, (4) student's attitude toward school, and (5) extenuating circumstances. The Board decision and acceptance or rejection of extenuating circumstances is final.

Extended illness or health condition - If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school shall arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practicable. If the student is unable to do his/her schoolwork or if there are major requirements of a particular course that cannot be accomplished outside of class, the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.

Excused absence for chronic health condition - Students with a chronic health condition, which interrupts regular attendance, may qualify for placement in a limited attendance and participation program. The student and his/her parent shall apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program shall be written following the advice and recommendations of the student’s medical advisor. The recommended limited program shall be approved by the principal. Staff shall be informed of the student’s needs, though the confidentiality of medical information shall be respected at the parent’s request. Absence verified by a medical practitioner may be sufficient justification for home instruction.

Tardies

Classroom tardies should be handled by the teacher. Excessive tardies will be referred to the building administrator’s office and consequences will follow the school’s tardy policy

Legal Reference: Art. IX, § 9, Idaho Constitution – Compulsory Attendance at School

I.C. § 33-202 School attendance compulsory

I.C. § 33-204 Exemption for Cause

I.C. § 33-205 Denial of School Attendance

I.C. § 33-207 Proceedings against parents or guardians