



# Merit College Preparatory Academy

## Attendance Policy & Procedure

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School attendance has a direct impact on a student's level of academic achievement. In order to make the most of each student's educational opportunities, Merit College Preparatory Academy expects students to be in class, on time, and prepared for learning each day. Attendance is crucial to improving student achievement. The opportunities lost through student absence and tardiness leave learning gaps that are difficult to fill.

When a student develops reliable attendance habits, they are demonstrating a life skill that will positively impact their lives while in school and after graduation. High attendance expectations improve academic achievement, graduation rates, responsibility, respect, school climate, and school safety.

Utah State Law requires students between the ages of six and eighteen to be in attendance at school unless they have graduated from high school (Utah code 53A-11-101, 53A-11-102).

It is primarily the parent's responsibility to ensure their student achieves punctual daily attendance as set forth in the Utah compulsory education requirements, (Utah Code 53A-11-101.5). Students are required to attend each class, on time, every school day unless properly excused.

Merit Academy believes that school attendance is a student-parent-school responsibility which involves all three participants in order to resolve attendance issues. Students who demonstrate attendance problems (as defined by school and state policy) will be subject to actions that could result in ineffective learning, loss of opportunities, and administrative action.

A parent/guardian may monitor their student's attendance by accessing the Student Information System (SIS) through Merit's website at <https://merit.usoe-dcs.org/login/>. They may also contact the school to obtain attendance information regarding their student.

### **Attendance Policy Goals**

Merit Academy's Attendance Policy will help accomplish the following goals:

- \* Provide all students and teachers the opportunity for success in the secondary education learning environment and life by maximizing instructional time.
- \* Provide a safe, effective, and uninterrupted learning environment for each student.
- \* Promote responsible behavior by teaching students to be accountable for their attendance.
- \* Support parent efforts in promotion of student attendance.
- \* Enforce state policies.

### **Administration Responsibility**

Administration will be responsible to communicate the Attendance Policy to staff, students, and parents.

Administration is responsible to work with families, teachers, and staff to intervene early and often when students exhibit truant behavior.

Administration is responsible to ensure the policy is implemented and enforced fairly and consistently.

Administration has the authority to determine whether an absence or tardy is excused or unexcused.

School administration may evaluate requests to approve extended or excessive absences. Such absences may be excused so long as the absences do not negatively impact the academic progress of the students. The decision to mark an absence or tardy “excused” is within the discretion of the school administration. School administrators have authority to grant exceptions to procedures.

## **Teacher Responsibility**

Teachers will be responsible for taking and recording accurate class attendance in SIS at the beginning of each period.

Teachers will be responsible to change an absence to a tardy if a student comes in late.

Teachers will be required to follow the school’s attendance policies.

Teachers will maximize the use of instructional time for the benefit of student learning and engagement.

Teachers should resist scheduling events that remove students from meaningful learning activities

Teachers will reasonably work with parents and students to help them recover from excused absences and stay current in learning activities and assessments.

Teachers will never punish a student with loss of participation points when they have excused absences or excused tardies but students will likely have class work they need to make up including notes to procure, assessments to complete, or other projects that will need to be completed before or after school.

**Note: It is the responsibility of the student or parent to promptly get with the teacher to re-schedule assessments, obtain materials handed out, ask for any assignments missed, agree on a turn in or completion date of things missed for full credit, and get notes from fellow students.**

## **School Responsibility**

School will keep accurate records of student’s daily attendance as required by Utah State Law.

School will notify students in a timely manner of any attendance issues that need to be resolved.

School will notify parents/guardians of a student’s excessive absences or tardies. Parent notification may include, but is not limited to one or more of the following:

- Parent Link calls
- Teacher contact
- Attendance office contact
- Computer-generated letters
- Counselor contact
- Administrator contact

## **Attendance Definitions (Rule R277-607)**

**Absence** is defined as a student’s non-attendance at school for one school day or part of one school day.

**Truant** is defined as absence without a valid excuse

**Habitual Truant** is defined as truant at least ten (10) times during one school year or fails to cooperate with efforts on the part of school authorities to resolve the minor’s attendance problem as required under Section 53A-11-101.

## **Absences**

Students may occasionally need to be absent for illness, emergencies, etc. In such cases, students may be excused but are responsible to make up any class work or assessments missed (daily participation points will not be deducted for excused absence).

Students have the responsibility to arrange with their teachers for any and all missed class work and to schedule taking missed assessments before or after school. Parents/guardians are advised to limit their student's' absences as a student's learning and grades can be significantly affected as a result.

Teachers, parents, and students can discuss how much time is reasonable for make-ups. Teachers may also publish their make-up policy in their disclosure document which students and parents sign.

Utah code 53A-11-101 defines a **Valid Excuse** as:

- Illness
- Death of a family member
- An approved school activity
- An absence permitted by a school-age minor's:
  - (i) Individualized education program, developed pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, as amended; or
  - (ii) Accommodation plan, developed pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- Any other excuse established as valid by a local charter board:
  - (i) Medical or dental appointments
  - (ii) Family emergencies
  - (iii) Family Activity or Travel that does not adversely impact the student's education

If you are planning a family event and your student will miss school, arrangements should be made to make up any missed class work with your student's teachers at least 3 days in advance. Please connect with the teacher and make a plan so your student will know when homework will be due and when assessments need to be taken that are missed as a result of the absence. The teacher, student, and parent should communicate and determine the number of days needed to help the student be successful in missed class work and assessments, and even consider alternative assignments. Each student is responsible to open communication with the teacher to establish due dates - it is not the teacher's responsibility to open this communication and if the student is not proactive and personally responsible they may lose homework and assessment credit.

Students having excessive excused absences exceeding all or part of five (5) school days due to an illness or injury may be required to provide a doctor's note specifically addressing the dates the student was absent from school.

### **Parent/guardian action for absences:**

Utah Law under the Compulsory School attendance subsection places the burden of responsibility for school attendance on the parent/guardian. Parents/guardian must contact the school and provide the reason for their student's absence. Failure to provide a reason for the absence will cause the absence to be documented as Unexcused.

**All Absences must be excused within 3 school days of the absence or they will be documented as unexcused.**

Parents/guardians may excuse their student's absence through the attendance secretary by:

- Calling (801) 491-7600 and leaving a detailed message on the attendance secretary's voicemail
- Sending a note with your student to be taken to the front office

### **Check out procedure:**

If a student leaves school building without a teacher for any reason they must first check out at the office. Students will not be allowed to check out of school without a parent/guardian's prior consent.

Parent/guardians can give their consent by:

- Calling the front office 801-491-7600 before the student is checked out
- Sending a note to the school office with their student
- Signing their student out at the front office

If a student does not follow this check out procedure they are sluffing and sluffs are not excused. When a student disappears from the school we will contact the parents / guardians as soon as possible and may also contact local law enforcement. Our campus is closed except at lunch time.

**Note: Students must check in at the front office if they return to school that day.**

## **Unexcused Absences**

An unexcused absence is an absence without a valid excuse as defined by Utah Law 53A-11-101 and/or an absence where the parent/guardian fails to contact the school to excuse a valid absence.

Absences that are not parent/guardian excused within 3 days will be considered unexcused and consequences will be applied.

Class work, assessments, and participation credit missed due to an unexcused absence or sluff will be accepted solely at the discretion of the teacher.

Students who are habitually truant will be restricted from attending or participating in extracurricular activities (activities after school or off campus) for one week and/or until consequences are fulfilled (this includes athletics and sports teams, performing arts, student activities, dances, club activities, etc.)

**Note:** If an absence has been recorded in error, please report this to the attendance office for correction.

## **10 Day Rule**

By law, any student who does not attend school for ten consecutive days without a valid excuse will be dropped from school rolls. The parent will be required to meet with school administration to discuss re-enrolling their student in school.

## **Open Campus**

We are an open campus for grades 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> at lunch only, and closed at all other times. Once students arrive on campus, they are expected to remain on campus under school employees supervision unless prior arrangement by a parent/guardian have been made with the Front Office or Attendance Secretary.

## **Single Absences**

A single absence occurs when a student has been marked absent in a single class period, but marked present in all or other class periods that school day. The student has not been excused by a parent/guardian or checked out at the office prior to the absence.

Students and/or parents are given written, email, or phone notice from the attendance office alerting them of their single absence that day or the following school day. The student then has one school day to clear up the single absence with the teacher and bring a note from a parent/guardian to the Attendance Secretary stating the absence is a mistake and/or cleared by a parent/guardian. If the student does not clear up their single absence within the given time it will be documented as a sluff and consequences will be applied.

Single Absences cannot be parent excused if the student did not properly check out with the office prior to the absence. Not attending class or leaving the building without permission, except at students designated lunch time, is a sluff.

## Sluff Absence

Sluff Absences are given when a student is out of class unexcused after arriving to school, or when the student has failed to clear up a single unexcused absence in a given school day. **Parents/guardians may not excuse a Sluff Absence.**

## Homebound

If a student misses ten (10) consecutive excused days due to illness, or other medical reason, a doctor's note will be required, and the student will be considered homebound. It will be at the discretion of the administration to determine the best course of action for each student. This may include, but is not limited to, being placed on an academic plan and/or having to complete missed class work for credit.

## SIS Absence Attendance Codes

The following SIS attendance codes are used to alert parents, students, and administration that the student has been marked absent.

Code	Description	Definition
X	Absent	Student is not in attendance during class and the absence has not yet been excused.
E	Excused Absence	Student's absence is valid excused.
O	Office Excused	Student has been meeting with a counselor, administrator, and/or teacher, or the student has been testing and has missed the class period.
A	Activity Excused	Student has missed class due to a school approved activity.
H	Homebound	A Student is missing school for 10 or more days. A doctor's note is required and must be turned in to the attendance office before absences are marked excused.

D	Doctor Excused	Absence has been excused by a doctor's note. Note must be turned into the attendance office for the absence to be excused.
S	Sluff	A student is out of class unexcused after they have arrived at school.
Z	Suspension	A student is suspended from school.
I	In - school Suspension	A student is suspended from their normal school routine. Student will remain in school but not in normal classes. They will be given a lunch break but not with their peers.

## Tardies:

Merit Academy's tardy policy will:

1. Enable teachers to utilize the entire class period for constructive academic learning and provide consistent consequences for tardiness.
2. Encourage students to show respect for teachers and peers.
3. Help establish Merit College Preparatory Academy as a school committed to educational excellence.

**When arriving tardy to school** students must sign in at the office and receive a tardy slip.

Parent/Guardians may excuse tardies within twenty-four (24) hours by:

1. Calling the attendance office
2. Signing the check in/check out sheet in the front office
3. Sending a note with the student who delivers it to the front office.

Parent/Guardians may not excuse tardies after the first period unless the student was previously checked out by their parent/guardian or arrived to school after the first period and were signed in at the office.

Because Merit Academy is an open campus at lunch time, parent/guardians may not excuse students for being tardy from lunch unless they were officially checked out by the parent/guardian.

Tardiness is not acceptable. It disrupts the class, hurts the morale of students who are on time, displays a negative attitude toward the class, and creates disruptions in the hallways and on campus

Students will be considered tardy if they are not in the classroom, in their seat, and prepared to work when the bell rings. Habitual tardiness may result in disciplinary action.

Utah State Law defines an "Excused Tardy" as lateness resulting from: illness, medical/dental appointment (verified by a note from the doctor/dentist), quarantine, weather or road conditions making travel dangerous, any usual cause acceptable to the director of the school. Tardiness for any other reason constitutes an unexcused tardy for which regular tardy policy consequences will apply.

## SIS Tardy Attendance Codes

The following SIS attendance codes are used to alert parents, students, and administration that the student has been marked tardy.

Code	Description	Definition
T	Tardy	Student entered class after class began.
L	Late Tardy	Student entered class at least 15 minutes late, but no more than 30 minutes late.
R	Office Tardy	Student has arrived late to school and checked in at the office
N	Office Excused Tardy	Student has been meeting with a counselor, administrator, and/or teacher, or the student has been testing and is late to class.
K	Excused Tardy	A student entered class after class begins and was excused by a parent by phone call, sign in, or note.
P	Tardy Absence	Student is more than 30 minutes late to class and is considered absent.

**Consequences for unexcused tardies and/or absences will be decided individually per student by the administration or appointee and may include but are not limited to:**

- E-mail or phone contact with parent or guardian
- Academic or service makeup sessions with teachers including study, cleaning, and extra assignments
- Before or After-school detention including additional academic assignments given by administration
- School service including cleaning, grounds work, or facilities maintenance
- Counseling contact
- Class schedule changes
- Attendance/tardy contract
- Lowered grades:
  - This is a natural result of not being in class and missing class work and/or participation points.
  - Any material handed out will need to be procured from the teacher/s before or after school.
  - Any notes will need to be procured from fellow students.
  - Teachers are not obligated to give students extra time for assessments when tardy.

Teachers are not obligated to let students make up a missed impromptu in class assessment due to an unexcused absence or tardy.

A scheduled missed assessment will be made up at the teacher's convenience and may have a late penalty based on the teacher classroom policy.

Late class work due to unexcused tardy or absence will have regular deduction applied as per the teacher's classroom policy

- Loss of credit
- Home visit from a school representative
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Alternative programs and placements
- Loss of eligibility for all extracurricular activities
- Involvement of other agencies
- Police contact
- Court referrals
- Parent letters as defined below:

**"Concern Letter"** is a letter mailed to the parent of a student who is regularly tardy, absent, and / or sluffing classes. The letter informs the parent of their student's attendance and / or tardy problems, requests help in solving the problems, and informs the parent or guardian of school action if the problems continue.

**"Notice of Truancy"** is a written notice mailed to or served on the parent of a student who is a least twelve (12) years of age or older who has five (5) truanancies during the current school year. The "Notice of Truancy" shall obtain the notifications and provisions required Utah Code Ann., 53A-11-101.7(4).

**"Habitual Truant Citation"** means a citation issued by Merit Academy's Attendance office (Truancy Specialist) or school administrator to a habitually truant student referring the student to Juvenile Court. A "Habitual Truant Citation" is issued when: the student has been truant an additional five (5) times in a particular class period or a total of twenty (20) additional truanancies in all class periods during the current school year after the Notice of Truancy has been issued; the school has made reasonable efforts described in Utah Code Ann., 53A-11-103 to resolve the student's attendance problems; AND the efforts to resolve the student's attendance problems have not been successful.

## Attendance Consequences

If the student and parent are not willing to comply with any of the above consequences decided, or the student continues to have unexcused absences or unexcused tardies, then:

1<sup>st</sup> offense will be 3-day suspension

2<sup>nd</sup> offense will be a 5-day suspension

3<sup>rd</sup> offense will be a 5-day suspension and a board discussion about expulsion

## Incentives/Recognitions

Incentives and recognitions for student attendance may be offered as determined by the administration.