

# Attendance Policy

Board Approved JULY/2021

## Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to ensure all Indiana Digital Learning School students maximize participation in learning opportunities through school attendance. The Indiana Digital Learning Schools are virtual education schools under Indiana Code 20-19-9-4. This policy includes requirements listed in Indiana Code 20-19-9-5. Additionally, Indiana Public Law and federal legislation set a 95% benchmark for a school's minimum attendance rate. Attendance rate is one of the factors that is considered when public schools are placed in performance categories and compared to other public schools.

The Union School Corporation believes that Indiana Digital Learning School students will attain the educational benefits of learning and the fulfilment of academic and career goals through engagement and attendance. Indiana Digital Learning Schools will provide students and families support with attendance, online schooling, work completion or life circumstances to have the opportunity to succeed in a virtual setting.

## Academically Engaged Students

Students enrolled in the Indiana Digital Learning Schools shall maintain good standing regarding Attendance and Engagement by:

- Logging into the Online School (OLS) or Learning Management System (LMS) daily
- Attending all required Class Connect sessions
- Engaging during the required Class Connect sessions
- Attending scheduled conferences
- Attending in-person State mandated testing
- Completing diagnostic and formative assessments
- Actively communicating with school staff
- Responding to request for two-way communication within one school day
- Proactively communicating with the school regarding technical issues
- Proactively communicating with the school regarding excused absences

Academically engaged students participate in learning opportunities by working within the curriculum and offline resources. Each lesson requires approximately 60 minutes of instructional time. Learning opportunities of instructional time involve interacting with the curriculum, progress made in the curriculum, assignment submissions, online Class Connect sessions attended, completion of internal assessments, and other offline resources. If a teacher or academic advisor cannot see evidence of learning they will follow the attendance intervention procedures.

## Student and Family Support and Orientation

Indiana Digital Learning School students are assigned an Attendance Advisor. The advisor monitors attendance, reaches out to students and families, facilitates tech solutions and helps the student reach all resources available. Families and students receive attendance information throughout the school year, including but not limited to an annual attendance policy session, student attendance status, engagement strategies and support. The Attendance Specialist

provides specific interventions for students and families of students who become truant. An Attendance Orientation is provided to every student, family and Learning Coach each school year. The student handbook also contains attendance information and is provided to families and students for public access on the school website.

## Attendance

All students enrolled for the entire school year must attend 180 instructional days per school year. The total instructional days are prorated based on the student's start date. The daily amount of expected instructional time are: 5 hours for Kindergarten – 5th Grade, 6 hours for 6-12th Grade, and 3 hours for Alternative School students. Time in excess to the expected daily amounts will be accepted towards the student's total instructional days.

Learning opportunities of instructional time include but are not limited to:

- interacting with the curriculum;
- progress made in the curriculum;
- assignment submissions;
- online Class Connect sessions attended;
- completion of internal assessments;
- other offline resources;
- and unique situations such as students placed in therapy centers, alternative settings or programs.

Proof of participation in online learning opportunities will be reviewed on a daily basis for every student. Progress and formative assessments may be required to demonstrate active participation in learning opportunities.

## Procedures to Report an Absence

Absences must be reported by the parent or legal guardian to be excused. The absence can be reported through written notification by emailing [attendance@indls.net](mailto:attendance@indls.net) or calling and leaving a voicemail on the attendance phone line at (765) 204-2224 ext.6477.

## Excused Absences

Absences will be considered excused for legitimate reasons, including but not limited to:

- illness verified by note from parent/guardian;
- illness (physical, mental, maternity, etc.) verified by note from Physician's office or hospital;
- funeral and bereavement;
- religious holiday;
- vacation;
- military connected absences;
- state fair participation or any other reasons exempted by Indiana Code to be recorded as absent.

Absences due to illness exceeding more than three consecutive days may result in a request for a physician's note.

## Attendance Reporting

Indiana Digital tracks daily student attendance through the Student Information Session. Student attendance is recorded in the Student Information System using the following attendance codes:

- **Virtual:** This code will be used when a student is considered "in attendance" at the virtual program or virtual school, pursuant to the local attendance policy (this policy). This code should

be used for virtual students. Indiana Digital students are virtual students.

- **Excused Absence:** This code will be used when a student is not “in attendance” and such absence is deemed “excused”, pursuant to the local attendance policy (this policy). This code should be used for both virtual and non-virtual students. A student who is not “in attendance” but is participating in one of the activities that is exempt by statute from consideration as an “absence” will be marked as Excused Absence.
- **Unexcused Absence:** This code should be used when a student is not “in attendance” and such absence is deemed “not excused”, pursuant to the local attendance policy. This code should be used for both virtual and non-virtual students.

## Truancy

According to Indiana Code 20-20-8-8, Chronic Absenteeism is defined as being absent 18 or more days within a school year for any reason and Habitual Truancy is defined as being absent 10 days or more from school within a school year without being excused.

Students meeting the Habitual Truancy qualification must be withdrawn from Indiana Digital Schools per IC 20-19-9-5. A student who is withdrawn pursuant to this policy may not be reenrolled for the school year in which the student is withdrawn per IC 20-24-7-13.

The Attendance Specialist provides specific interventions for students and families of students who become truant. Prior to a student reaching Habitual Truancy status, the school will establish a truancy conference. Notification of the conference date, time and location will be sent to the student’s family through email and U.S. certified mail. The notice will clearly state that the student has failed to adhere to the attendance policy and required immediate intervention. The truancy conference team will seek to understand the unique situation of the student and family. The school will review information provided by the student’s family and will determine if there is sufficient basis for an excused absence, in accordance with school policy.

If a student is withdrawn due to Habitual Truancy, Indiana Digital will:

- Report the student to the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS)
- Report to the Indiana Clearinghouse for Information on Missing Children and Missing Endangered Adults (The Clearinghouse)
- Report to the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) information to indicate ineligibility for an operator’s license or learner’s permit
- Call the local law enforcement agency to confirm child welfare
- Not allow the student to re-enroll for the remainder of the current school year

## Testing Attendance

Indiana Digital Learning Schools must follow the rules and regulations set by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). According to IDOE, all students are required to participate in state testing. In accordance with state law, students refusing to attend assigned state testing days or any scheduled make-up testing sessions will be reported as an unexcused absence and subject to Habitual Truancy laws.

According to Indiana’s Assessment Policies absence from mandatory state testing cannot be considered an excused absence. The Assessment Policy states: *Every student attending a public, charter, or accredited nonpublic school in Indiana must take the required Indiana assessments to graduate. Furthermore, it is a violation of Indiana’s compulsory school attendance laws for a parent/guardian to refuse to send his or her child to school for the purpose of avoiding tests, including assessments (see IC 20-33-2).*