Toronto District School Board

Title: **STUDENT ATTENDANCE, SAFE ARRIVAL AND SAFE DEPARTURE (ELEMENTARY)**

Adopted: June 17, 2014
Effected: June 17, 2014
Revised: January 24, 2023
Reviewed: January 24, 2023
Authorization: Executive Council

1. RATIONALE

The Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure (Elementary) Procedure (the "Procedure") supports the implementation of the Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure Policy (P085).

2. OBJECTIVE

- To outline expectations for student attendance, arrival and departure.
- To establish intervention and supportive strategies and best practices to address patterns of absence impacting learning, unexplained absences, prolonged absenteeism, and lateness.
- To implement a system-wide standard for safe arrival and departure at TDSB schools and programs.

3. DEFINITIONS

Board refers to the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "TDSB".

Compulsory School Age, for the purpose of this Procedure, refers to any student who turns six (6) on or before the first day of school in any year. These students are legally required to attend school. If a student is younger than six (6) but registered with a school by their parent/guardian, their attendance is also required (even if they are not yet six (6)). Students are legally required to attend school until they reach the age of eighteen (18).

Parent/Guardian - may include parents, guardians or any other caregiver legally recognized as acting in place of the parent.

Operational Procedure: Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure (Elementary)
"R:\Secretariat\Staff\G02\03\OP\PR707A"

Page 1 of 13

Patterns of Absence Impacting Learning refers to patterns and/or frequencies of absences that can impede student learning, achievement, and well-being. It may also include absences that occur on certain days or occasions (e.g., tests or exams), or that may be the result of factors such as bullying, racism or hate, emerging mental health issues, or other socio-emotional or physical factors that may arise.

Prolonged Absence refers to an absence of at least fifteen (15) consecutive school days.

Safe Arrival refers to a system of protocols which are performed together with daily school attendance taking and which are designed to account for any student's unexplained failure to arrive at school or their off-site learning location (e.g., excursion).

Safe Departure refers to a system of protocols which are performed and designed to account for students' safe dismissal from school or school-related off-site location (e.g., excursion, inter-school athletics).

TDSB is the Toronto District School Board, which is also referred to as the "Board".

Unexplained Absence refers to situations when a student is absent and no reason has been provided to the school (e.g., parent/guardian has not phoned or provided documentation explaining the reason for the student's absence).

4. RESPONSIBILITY

Associate Director, Student Well-Being and Innovation

5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

This Procedure applies to all TDSB students, parents/guardians, teaching and support staff, administrators and/or designate(s) who support elementary student attendance procedures.

The intervention and supportive strategies and best practices outlined in this Procedure apply to all registered students enrolled in TDSB elementary schools.

The obligation of a registered student to attend school applies even if the student is not of compulsory school age (e.g., Junior and Senior Kindergarten).

6. PROCEDURE

6.1. Local Oversight/Principal Responsibilities

6.1.1. The Principal is responsible for coordinating internal office processes regarding students' attendance, safe arrival and safe departure.

6.1.2. The Principal is expected to communicate with parents/guardians about attendance practices and expectations outlined in this Procedure at the start of each school year, and as needed throughout the year.

6.1.3. The Principal is responsible for how communications with parents/guardians are managed by office and teaching staff.

6.1.4. The Principal is responsible for establishing processes through which Occasional Teachers have access to materials required for recording and reporting attendance.

6.2. Safe Arrival Program and Reporting

6.2.1. *Collection of Information*

(a) At the start of each school year or upon new registration, the Principal will communicate the need for parents/guardians to provide accurate, complete, and current contact information.

(b) The Principal will request contact information including telephone numbers (i.e., home, cellular, and/or work), email addresses, and home address for the parents/guardians of the student and an emergency contact such as a relative or neighbour.

(c) The parent/guardian must inform the school if their contact information changes during the school year to update their contact information in the School Information System (SIS).

6.2.2. *Parent/Guardian Responsibilities*

(a) Parents/Guardians are expected to notify the school when a student is going to be absent or late for school. If a student is absent or late for any reason, the parent/guardian must contact the school immediately, or use the School Messenger App, and report the reason for the absence.

(b) If the school is not informed about the absence, TDSB's automated system attempts to contact the parent/guardian. The school Principal or designate will make attempts to contact the parent/guardian to determine the reason for the absence.

6.2.3. *School Information Systems (SIS) - Tracking Absences and Lateness*

(a) In order to contribute to students' overall academic and personal profiles as well as address any issues with prolonged absences and/or patterns of absence impacting learning, all absences and late arrivals will be tracked electronically through the SIS.

(b) The Principal (or designate) is responsible for establishing processes so that the following information is entered into the SIS before the end of each school day:

(i) Student attendance;

(ii) The names of students who are absent including those reported to the school by parents/guardians;

(iii) The reasons for all student absences;

(iv) The names of students who arrived late (these names may appear on the Absentee Report); and

(v) Any other pertinent information (e.g., messages left for parents/guardians that could not be reached).

(c) It is important that the information entered into the SIS is accurate and complete. Daily recording is required to identify potential errors or patterns of absence.

(d) Additional reference materials to support staff are available through Service IT under "PowerSchool SIS - Admin Attendance Resources" and in Appendix A - TDSB Recommended Attendance Reports.

6.2.4. *Reporting of Morning Attendance*

(a) Each morning, the classroom teacher will report all attendance (presence, absence, and lateness) to the school office promptly after the start of the school day. Discrepancies should be brought to the attention of the Office Administrator. Parents/Guardians may enter a reason for absence through the School Messenger call out, which will be automatically recorded in the SIS.

(b) The Office Administrator (or designate) will enter in the reasons for absence, based on information provided by parents/guardians who have contacted the school, or for students who have arrived late, into the SIS. School Messenger App submissions will be automatically added into the SIS.

(c) The Office Administrator (or designate) will attempt to contact the parents/guardians of each student who is absent for reasons unknown. This should be done as soon as possible in the morning.

(d) If there is a concern about a student's whereabouts or if harm is suspected, attempts should be made to reach all listed contacts and emergency contacts. If unsuccessful, the case is escalated to the Principal (or designate) if a student's whereabouts are unknown:

(i) Principal will begin an internal investigation;

(ii) Principal may consult with Board Attendance Counsellor and/or Social Worker to make contact or a home visit;

(iii) The Principal may take further action, including calling the police;

(iv) If the police become involved, the Principal will advise the appropriate Superintendent of Education and the Communications department accordingly.

6.2.5. *Reporting of Afternoon Attendance*

(a) The procedure outlined for morning attendance (see section 6.2.4 above) should be applied again in the afternoon.

6.3. Unique Attendance Taking Scenarios

6.3.1. *Synchronous Virtual Classes*

(a) The Attendance-Taking Teacher will take attendance at the start of each morning and afternoon. Students logged into the virtual environment may be asked to respond when prompted. Students arriving late will be "signed in" by the Attendance-Taking Teacher through PowerTeacher Pro.

(b) Students will be instructed to notify the teacher if they need to step away from the computer for a few minutes and they will be expected to let the teacher know when they have returned. Teachers will establish specific classroom practices for students to communicate their presence (i.e., reactions/gestures instead of verbal/electronic communication for younger students). Teachers will connect with students that leave the class too frequently or for longer-than-reasonable periods of time to provide support and guidance.

(c) Teachers are encouraged to use regular participation/engagement strategies to keep students involved. If a student stops responding to prompts and is not participating in the class, the teacher will connect with the student to check that everything is alright and to reinforce the expectation that students need to stay active and engaged in the class.

(d) Should a student be unresponsive/inactive for a significant portion of the class and have missed the essence of the class/lesson, the teacher will let the student know that if the unresponsive behaviour continues, there will be follow up with the parent/guardian and the administration.

(i) *Non-Attendance-Taking Teachers:* Teachers who do not have formal attendance taking responsibilities should keep their own record of student attendance for the purposes of assessment, evaluation and reporting. Non-Attendance-Taking Teachers will have access to the morning and afternoon attendance records to be aware of which students should be present in their virtual class. If a student is absent,

the Non-Attendance-Taking Teacher should notify the administration by email and "CC" the Homeroom Teacher about the unexplained absence.

(e) Absences from virtual classes will be addressed in the same way as absences from in-person classes.

6.3.2. *Excursion*s

(a) Teachers are required to take attendance before departing school at the start of excursions, in the same manner as all other classes. See the Excursions Policy (P033) and Excursions Procedure (PR511) for additional safety protocols.

6.4. Safe Departure Program

6.4.1. *During School Day*

(a) Parents/Guardians must provide authorization in order for students to depart the school premises during the school day. Students in JK – Grade 3 must be picked up by an authorized individual. Students in Grade 4 – Grade 8 are able to depart on their own with parent/guardian written authorization.

(b) Students may temporarily leave school premises unaccompanied during lunch, subject to written authorization from their parent/guardian.

(c) Individuals authorized to pick up a student by their parents/guardians may be required to show school staff their government issued photo identification.

6.4.2. *End of School Day*

(a) Students in JK – Grade 3 will only be released to an authorized individual, and/or as requested by their parent/guardian (e.g., a parent may pick up their child from school or may provide a written note that their child is authorized to leave the school premises with an older sibling).

(b) Individuals authorized to pick up a student by their parents/guardians may be required to show school staff their government issued photo identification.

(c) Students in Grade 4 - Grade 8 are released upon the final day bell, in the manner authorized by their parent/guardian. Alternative departure practices may be required for some students in Grades 4 - 8 with Special Education Needs.

(d) See the Transportation of Students Policy (P020) for additional information regarding the safe and equitable transportation of TDSB students.

6.5. Monitoring Absences and Lateness

6.5.1. *Strategies for Addressing Patterns of Absence Impacting Learning, Prolonged Absences and Lateness*

(a) The following process will outline the responsibilities of school staff across three levels of interventions:

(i) immediate supportive and culturally responsive strategies for when a student is discovered as being late or absent without explanation;

(ii) longer-term immediate supportive and culturally responsive strategies for when a student demonstrates patterns of absence impacting learning or prolonged **unexplained** absences; and

(iii) longer-term immediate supportive and culturally responsive strategies for when a student demonstrates patterns of absence impacting learning and prolonged **explained** absences.

(b) To enable more timely interventions, the SIS will flag all absences and late arrivals at the following intervals:

(i) 5, 10, and 15 day absences/late arrivals (consecutive and cumulative)

(ii) Every 5 out of 10 and 10 out of 30 days absences/late arrivals (cumulative)

(iii) 15 day-intervals up to 60 days (consecutive)

(c) Schools are encouraged to regularly run the Daily Attendance - Consecutive Days Absent report

(d) Additional reference materials to support staff are available through Service IT under "PowerSchool SIS - Admin Attendance Resources" and in Appendix A - TDSB Recommended Attendance Reports.

6.5.2. *Guidelines and Best Practices for Identifying Patterns of Absence Impacting Learning, Including the Implementation of Interventions and Strategies*

(a) **Daily Unexplained Absence**

(i) The Office Administrator (OA) (or designate) will contact the parents/guardians and then update the SIS.

(ii) If parents/guardians cannot be reached, please refer to 6.2.4(d).

(b) **2 – 4 Day Unexplained Absence (consecutive only)**

(i) The Principal should establish processes through which classroom teachers reach out to students and their parent/guardian when there is an unexplained absence. Teachers should reinforce the importance of regular attendance, and the expectation that students should attend class every day when possible. When not possible, the parent/guardian should notify the school, ideally prior to the absence. Teachers should document this communication.

(ii) The Principal should establish processes through which classroom teachers share concerns regarding students missing class without reason with the administration. Clear expectations around the steps that classroom teachers should first take should be outlined.

(c) **5 Days (consecutive) or 5 out of 10 Days (cumulative), Explained and Unexplained Absence**

(i) The Principal (or designate) may request an external confirmation for absences (e.g., medical note, travel verification, etc.). If absences are explained, the Principal will review the reasons provided and determine whether further information is required.

(ii) When first connecting with a student's parents/guardians, the Principal will attempt to determine why regular school attendance is an issue and what can be done to rectify the situation.

(iii) The Principal can refer the student to the In-School Support Team (IST) if absences continue to be unexplained and if the Principal suspects a student's learning, achievement, and well-being is being negatively impacted.

(iv) Should any information come to the attention of the school staff or be revealed through the IST process that a student may be at risk of or has suffered physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to family violence or neglect by their caregivers, the employee will report to a Children's Aid Society (CAS) in accordance with Section 72 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (2017) and the Abuse and Neglect of Students Procedure (PR560).

(d) **6 – 9 Day Unexplained Absence (consecutive only)**

(i) The Principal should establish processes to identify students who are missing classes without reason. Schools are encouraged to regularly run the Daily Attendance - Consecutive Days Absent report and SIS reports that identify students missing consecutive and cumulative classes. Follow up with teachers should take place if they have not

been notifying the administration of a student missing classes.

(ii) The Principal, and where applicable Vice Principals, will track student attendance, work with parents/guardians as partners in supporting the development of good attendance habits and send attendance letters when students continue to miss classes/school. Early steps, supports and intervention can assist students with shifting attendance patterns and can help families address concerns that may be preventing a student from regularly attending class before the attendance negatively impacts the student's achievement and success in the class/school.

(iii) If unsuccessful in establishing contact through other methods, the Principal will send a letter home requesting an explanation for absences and requesting a meeting with the parents/guardians.

(e) **10 Days (consecutive), 10 out of 30 Days (cumulative), Explained or Unexplained Absence**

(i) The Principal may request an external validation for absences (e.g., medical note, travel verification, etc.). If absences are explained, the Principal will review the reasons provided and determine whether further information is required.

(ii) The Principal should request a meeting with parents/guardians, where appropriate.

(iii) The Principal will consider the available interventions to encourage attendance such as:

(A) Involvement of in-school staff;

(B) Daily attendance monitoring sheet to support positive re-engagement;

(C) Timetable or program change; or

(D) Referral to the TDSB's Professional Support Services or external community counseling agency.

(iv) The Principal can also refer the student to the School Support Team (SST) particularly if absences continue to be unexplained or if the student's achievement or well-being is being impacted.

(v) Should any information come to the attention of the school staff or be revealed through the SST process that a student may be at risk of or has suffered physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to family violence or

neglect by their caregivers, the employee will report to a CAS in accordance with Section 72 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (2017) and the Abuse and Neglect of Students Procedure (PR560).

(vi) Where appropriate, implementation of interventions will be pursued in consultation of the Superintendent of Education.

(f) **11 Consecutive Absences Without Appropriate Supporting Documentation**

(i) Discussion/Referral to an Attendance Counsellor can begin for students absent 11-15 days. ***Day 15 triggers a mandatory referral to Attendance Services***. The Principal will initiate a Professional Support Services Referral Form in SAP CRM (System Analysis Program Customer Relationship Management) on the 16th day of consecutive absence without appropriate supporting documentation and complete the Attendance Checklist and Attendance Profile for the student.

6.5.3. *Implications of a Referral to the School Support Team and/or Professional Support Services for Patterns of Absence Impacting Learning*

(a) When a recommendation for Attendance Support emerges from the School Support Team (SST) in response to patterns of absence impacting learning, the Principal will refer the student to Professional Support Services.

(b) In the elementary panel, assistance is available from the designated social worker (who acts as an attendance counselor).

(c) The attendance counselor/social worker will further investigate the reason(s) for the absences and report back to the school to maintain coordinated engagement between student and school. Should any information come to the attention of the attendance counselor/social worker that a student may be at risk of or has suffered physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, exposure to family violence or neglect by their caregivers, the employee will report to a CAS in accordance with Section 72 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (2017) and the Abuse and Neglect of Students Procedure (PR560).

(d) The school staff and the attendance counselor/social worker will collaborate and discuss possible culturally responsive interventions and supports that center student identities and voice, and who will assume responsibility for implementing the plan.

6.6. Guideline for Addressing Prolonged Absences

6.6.1. *Prolonged Absences*

(a) If a student is absent for more than 15 consecutive days without appropriate supporting documentation, the absence is considered and addressed as a prolonged absence.

6.6.2. *After an Unexplained Additional 15 Days (consecutive only)*

(a) If the student misses an additional 15 consecutive days after a referral has been made to the attendance counselor/social worker, the attendance counselor/social worker must immediately provide the school with a completed Prolonged Absence Form. An additional completed Prolonged Absence Form must be sent to the school after each additional 15-day period of consecutive absence.

6.6.3. *Attendance Services Support to Address Prolonged Absences*

(a) If the full spectrum of learning options, resources, and school and emotional supports is unable to result in an improvement in the student's attendance, the attendance counselor/social worker may arrange for the student, parents/guardians, and a school administrator to attend an Attendance Review Committee (ARC) meeting. The attendance counselor will attend all Attendance Review Committee meetings. The Committee may discuss a possible recommendation for the student's return to school or enrolment in an approved alternative program. At the meeting, staff may inform the parents/guardians and student that possible measures could include:

(i) an application to the Provincial Offences Court and a charge laid under the Education Act against students between the ages of 12 to 16 years of age; and

(ii) an application to the Provincial Offences Court and a charge laid under the Education Act against parents of students under the age of 12.

6.6.4. *Implications of Prolonged Absences*

(a) Student attendance is recorded on school registers and sent to the Ministry of Education (Ministry) for funding purposes.

(b) The TDSB is required to record enrolment and maintain enrolment records according to the format prescribed by the Ministry and according to the enrolment register instructions provided annually by the Ministry (i.e., Enrolment Verification Application (EVA) and Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) procedures).

(c) There are specific instructions in the Enrolment Register Guidelines related to Prolonged Absences. Schools must follow these guidelines to ensure full compliance as registers are subject to audit from the Ministry at any time. Failure to follow these guidelines can result in significant impact to the TDSB.

7. EVALUATION

This Procedure will be reviewed as required, but at a minimum every four (4) years after the effective date.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – TDSB Recommended Attendance Reports

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislation
- *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*
- *Education Act,* sections 21-31

Policies
- Excursions (P033)
- Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure (P085)
- Transportation of Students Policy (P020)

Procedures
- Abuse and Neglect of Students (PR560)
- Excursions (PR511)
- Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure (Secondary) (PR707B)

Other Documents:
- Policy/Program Memorandum No. 123 Safe Arrivals
- Ministry Enrolment Register Instructions for Elementary and Secondary Schools

TDSB RECOMMENDED ATTENDANCE REPORTS

PowerSchool Report	Breadcrumbs	Trillium Report
Absentee Report	Start Page > Attendance>Reports>Absentee Report	Administration List
N/A	N/A	Daily Absence List
Student Attendance - Daily Historical Summary	Start Page > PSCB Custom Reports > Attendance > Student Attendance - Daily Historical Summary	Attendance Profile
Attendance Profile (PDF)	Start Page > Reports > Reports (System) > Attendance Profile	Attendance Profile
Class Roster (PDF)	Start Page > Reports > Run Reports > Class Rosters (PDF)	Class List
Students - Class Roster	Start Page > PSCB Custom Reports > Scheduling (Current Year) > Students - Class Roster	Class List
Meeting Attendance - Consecutive Days Absent	Start Page > PSCB Custom Reports > Attendance > Daily Attendance - Consecutive Days Absent	Consecutive Days Absent/Late
Meeting Attendance - Selected Date / Date Range	Start Page > PSCB Custom Reports > Attendance > School Attendance Meeting Attendance - Selected Date / Date Range	Administration List
School Attendance - Daily Attendance Summary	Start Page > PSCB Custom Reports > Attendance > School Attendance - Daily Attendance Summary	Office List
Student Attendance - Daily Dates and Count Summary	Start Page > PSCB Custom Reports > Attendance > Student Attendance - Daily Count/Dates Summary	Attendance Tally