

# Toronto District School Board

Policy P085

Title: **STUDENT ATTENDANCE, SAFE ARRIVAL AND SAFE DEPARTURE**

Adopted: June 18, 2014  
Effectuated: June 18, 2014  
Revised: June 29, 2022  
Reviewed: June 29, 2022  
Authorization: Board of Trustees

## 1. RATIONALE

The Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure Policy (the “Policy”) supports the implementation of the Board’s obligations under the *Education Act*, and the direction of the Ministry of Education as stated in Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 123 Safe Arrivals, in order to maximize students’ academic success, safety and well-being.

## 2. OBJECTIVE

- To outline expectations for student attendance, arrival and departure.
- To establish intervention strategies and best practices to address patterns of absence impacting learning, unexplained absences, prolonged absenteeism, and lateness.
- To create 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 Policy, 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 parent(s), guardian(s) or any other caregiver legally recognized as acting in place of the parent.

*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 course-related off-site learning location (e.g., Cooperative education, 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., Cooperative education, 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 (i.e., parent(s)/guardian(s) have not phoned or provided documentation explaining the reason for the student's absence).

#### **4. RESPONSIBILITY**

The Director of Education holds primary responsibility for the implementation of this Policy.

Within the Director's Office, the responsibility for the coordination and day-to-day management of the Policy is assigned to the Associate Director, Business Operations and Service Excellence .

#### **5. APPLICATION AND SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all employees, students and parent(s)/guardian(s) of the Board. The Policy applies to in-person and virtual classroom settings.

#### **6. POLICY**

##### **6.1. Student Arrival and Attendance**

- 6.1.1. The Board recognizes that safe arrival and regular attendance are essential to the academic success and well-being of all students.
- 6.1.2. The Board acknowledges the legal responsibility of students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure attendance and punctuality.
- 6.1.3. Under the *Education Act*, section 21(1), persons of compulsory school age are mandated to attend an elementary or secondary school (or school-approved educational program) on every school day from the first school day of the academic year.
- 6.1.4. The Board will establish and implement culturally responsive supports, intervention strategies and best practices to encourage regular attendance and punctuality by all students who are enrolled in a school or program operated by the Board.
- 6.1.5. The Board will report, track, and monitor student absences and lateness for in-person and virtual classroom settings.
- 6.1.6. The Board will address patterns of absence impacting learning, prolonged and unexplained absences, as well as lateness, through timely measures or culturally responsive supports and interventions by principals, guidance counselors, classroom teachers, social workers, and other appropriate staff employed at the school or in central departments (e.g., Urban Indigenous Education Centre, Centre of Excellence for Black Student Achievement).

## **6.2. Student Departure**

- 6.2.1. The Board recognizes that safe departure is an integral element for the safety of all students.
- 6.2.2. The Board will implement system-wide procedures (see PR707A and PR707B) for safe and timely departures of all students who are enrolled in a school or program operated by the Board, in accordance with applicable legislation and based on best practices.
- 6.2.3. Departure from excursions and other off-site locations will adhere to the TDSB Excursions Policy (P033) requirements.
- 6.2.4. The Board will work with parent(s)/guardian(s) to make suitable arrangements for their child's daily departure (pick-up, transportation, etc.) at the end of the school day.
  - (a) All students in JK to Grade 3, including those with Special Education needs will only be released to an authorized individual, or in a manner requested by parent(s)/guardian(s).
  - (b) Parent(s)/guardian(s) of students in Grade 4 to 8 may choose to designate in writing how their child will be permitted to leave school property.

(c) Alternative departure practices may be required for some students in Grades 4-12 and those over 18 years of age with Special Education Needs.

6.2.5. Students under the age of 18 will not be permitted to leave school premises during the day's instructional time without authorization from a parent/guardian.

6.2.6. Students may temporarily leave school premises during the day's non-instructional time (e.g., lunch, spare) subject to the following conditions:

(a) Students at the secondary level will be permitted to leave the school premises during non-instructional time.

(b) Students at the elementary level will be permitted to leave the school premises unaccompanied during non-instructional time, subject to written consent from their parent(s)/guardian(s).

### **6.3. Institutional Accountability**

6.3.1. The Board is committed to creating safe school environments for all students.

6.3.2. The Board will adhere to the Transportation of Students Policy (P020) as it relates to the transportation and safe arrival and departure of students.

6.3.3. The Principal is responsible for:

(a) setting up processes to ensure that the attendance of students is reported, tracked, and monitored in accordance with this Policy;

(b) implementing the safe arrival and safe departure procedures; and

(c) communicating expectations for safe arrival, attendance and departure to staff and the school community.

6.3.4. Central Staff will work with the Principal and the appropriate Superintendent of Education to provide support in respect of any attendance-related matter that is referred to TDSB Professional Support Services. Designated Central Staff are authorized to fill the role of School Attendance Counsellors under the *Education Act* and may, in continued collaboration with the Principals and school staff, provide supports to re-engage students. This may include enforcing attendance in accordance with the *Education Act*.

6.3.5. Teachers, including Occasional Teachers, will ensure that safe arrival and departure procedures are carried out in classes for which they are responsible.

- 6.3.6. Volunteers will not participate in the implementation of safe arrival and safe departure programs.
- 6.3.7. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are responsible for communicating any planned student absences, lateness, or change in safe departure plans to the school on a timely basis and for providing the school with complete and current emergency information to enable the school to make any necessary follow-up contacts.

## **7. SPECIFIC DIRECTIVES**

The Director of Education is authorized to issue operational procedures to implement this Policy.

## **8. EVALUATION**

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

## **9. APPENDICES**

Not Applicable.

## **10. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

Legislation

- *Education Act*, Section 21

Policies

- Excursions (P033)
- Transportation of Students (P020)

Procedures

- Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure Procedures (Elementary) (PR707A)
- Student Attendance, Safe Arrival and Safe Departure Procedures (Secondary) (PR707B)

Other Documents:

- Ministry of Education, Policy and Program Memorandum No. 123 – Safe Arrivals