

Saint Demetrios Greek-American School Attendance Policy

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Saint Demetrios Greek-American School Implantation of Attendance Policy

Student achievement has always been the main focus of every district. With all the changes today in educational policy and practice it student achievement is the driving force of every change implemented in our schools. “Student achievement is affected in a negative way by absenteeism.” (Roby , 2004 p.5) The New York State Department of Education has implemented policies and programs in order to aide in reducing the amount of absences a student takes throughout the year. NCLB was one very effective program which focused on student achievement while work on the key factors that hinder a child in performing to their potential. Poor school attendance has triggered strong concerns amongst the school board, administration, and parents. Studies have shown that if student attendance improves so will their educational achievement. Lamdin (1996)

Research has shown that students drop out because of several reasons such as poor grades, classroom performance and low attendance. (Sable & Gaviola, 2007, p.1) In 2008 more than 90,000 NYC public school students were absent for more than a month. (Medina, 2008) According to the National Center for Student Poverty excessive absenteeism is a child that misses 10% of the school year. (Ashford, 2009, p.1) Throughout the country most states have

compulsory attendance laws and guidelines to enforce school age children to attend school.

However, many of the laws do not address continuing problems of truancy in private schools. In

New York State the educational policy is as follows:

Section 104.1(i) of Commissioner's Regulations

Current through March 31, 2010.Comprehensive Attendance Policy.

1. Requirement. On or before June 30, 2002, each public school district, board of cooperative educational services (BOCES), charter school, county vocational education and extension board and nonpublic elementary, middle and secondary school shall adopt a comprehensive attendance policy that contains the elements described in paragraph (2) of this subdivision. The purpose of the policy shall be to ensure the maintenance of an adequate record verifying the attendance of all children at instruction in accordance with Education Law sections 3205 and 3210 and establish a mechanism by which the patterns of pupil absence can be examined to develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance. A public school district, BOCES, charter school or county vocational education and extension board shall adopt its comprehensive attendance policy only after at least one public hearing that provides for the participation of school personnel, parents, students and any other interested party.
2. Content of the policy. The board of education, board of cooperative educational services, charter school board, county vocational education and extension board, and administrator of a nonpublic school shall incorporate the following elements into the comprehensive attendance policy:
 - i. a statement of the overall objectives to be accomplished;
 - ii. a description of the specific strategies to be employed to accomplish these objectives;
 - iii. a determination of which pupil absences, tardiness and early departures will be excused and which will not be excused and an illustrative list of excused and unexcused pupil absences and tardiness;
 - iv. a description of the coding system used to identify the reason for a pupil's absence, tardiness or early departure recorded in the register of attendance;
 - v. a description of the school district, BOCES, charter school, county vocational education and extension board or nonpublic school policy regarding pupil attendance and a pupil's ability to receive course credit. Any board of education, board of cooperative educational services, charter school board or county vocational education and extension board that adopts a policy establishing a minimum standard of attendance in order for a pupil to be eligible for course credit shall have the AUTHORITY to determine that a properly excused pupil absence, for which the pupil has performed any assigned make up work, shall not be counted as an absence for the purpose of determining the pupil's eligibility for course credit under such policy. In the event a board of education, board of

- cooperative educational services, charter school board or county vocational education and extension board adopts a minimum attendance standard as a component of its policy, such policy shall include a description of the notice to a pupil's parent(s) or person(s) in parental relation as well as the specific intervention strategies to be employed prior to the denial of course credit to the pupil for insufficient attendance.
- vi. a description of the incentives to be employed to encourage pupil attendance and any disciplinary sanctions to be used to discourage unexcused pupil absences, tardiness and early departures;

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND THE COMPLETE POLICY CAN BE FOUND AT THE WEBSITE BELOW.

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ssr/lawsregs/104-1iAttendance20Regs.html>

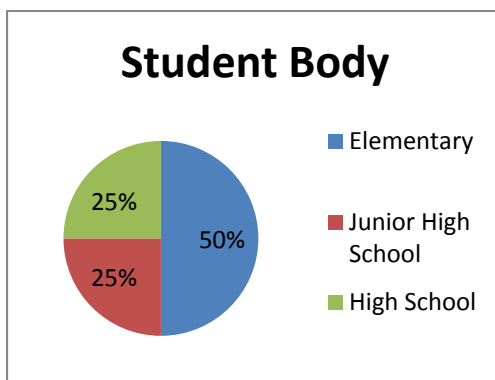
While the goal of the NYS attendance policy makes an attempt to encourage students to come to school and requires all school to know the whereabouts of every student, it fails to instill some type of penalty for excessive absenteeism. In addition, it fails to include any mandates on private or religious institutions.

These laws that leave out private and parochial schools give an edge to the parents that have their children enrolled in these institutions. Many parents enroll their child(ren) in private and parochial schools in order to avoid legal issues that may arise for truancy and other issues that can and may go undetected or even overlooked. Many schools are forced to make accommodations for these students in order to keep enrollment and tuition up.

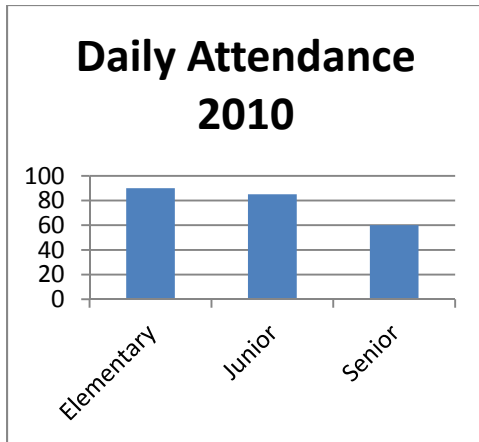
During the 2009 school year our school noticed the increase in student absenteeism. Even though the administration made every attempt to work together with families in order to increase the amount of days certain students attended school, the lack of support from parents and students forced the school to re-evaluate its' attendance policy. The majority of our student body was in the elementary grades. While our attendance per day was approximately 90% we believed that there was room for improvement. We also understood that parents had to bring the younger

children to school because they needed to go to work and face issues with Children Protective Services if reported by the school for infrequent school attendance. When looking at our Junior High School the administration noticed a spike in days absent by many more students. The greatest absenteeism was by students in the High School. We believed that was because of the lack of parental control in the morning when the parents had to leave for work and believed that the child(ren) was going to school. In addition, many of the High School students and their parents were very familiar with the NYS attendance policy which did not punish any child that had an excessive amount of absences during a specific term or year. The law allows the administration to determine the type of penalty. Unfortunately, without a bulletproof policy many parents believed that since they pay tuition they are entitled to certain accommodations.

Below is a break down of the student enrollment:



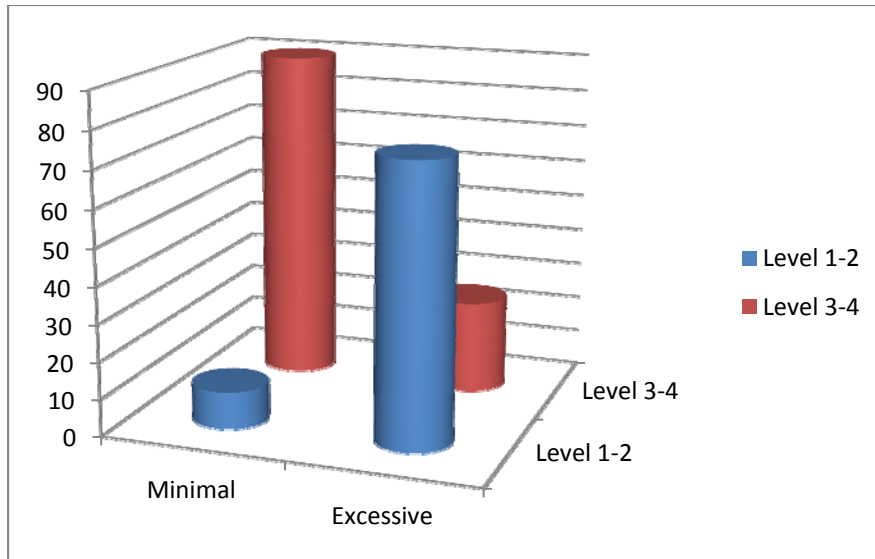
Student Attendance for the 2010-2011 School Year: The chart below displays the attendance break down for the year. 90% of the elementary school (Grades K-4) was present on any given day, 85% of the Junior High School was present on any given day, and only 60% of the High School was present on any given day.



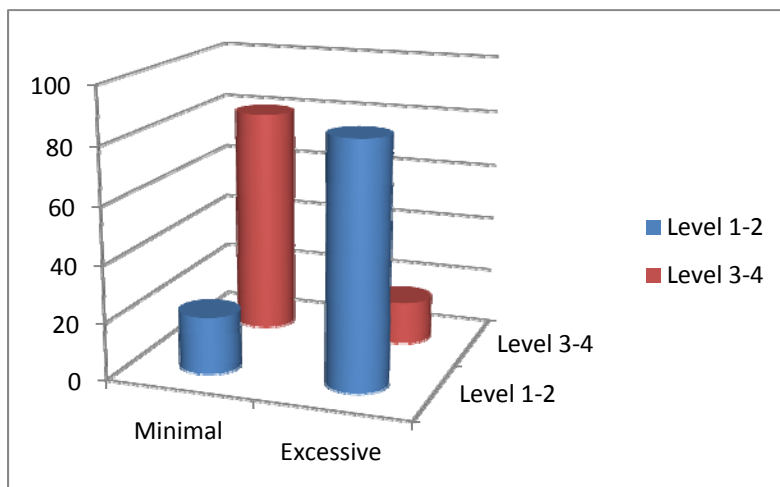
During the summer of 2010 the School Board decided that it was imperative that an attendance policy that addressed the increase in student absenteeism while holding parents and students accountable. In order for the Board to pass such a drastic policy the Board needed to show how excessive absences from school do indeed affect a child's academic performance. Moreover, failing standardized test scores do not look good to prospective parents. The administration decided to examine the ELA and standardized Math scores of students that have had an excessive amount of absences compared to students that were present more frequently for both the Elementary and Junior High School. For the High School the board examined one (1) Regents exam per grade 9-12.

The chart below displays the findings:

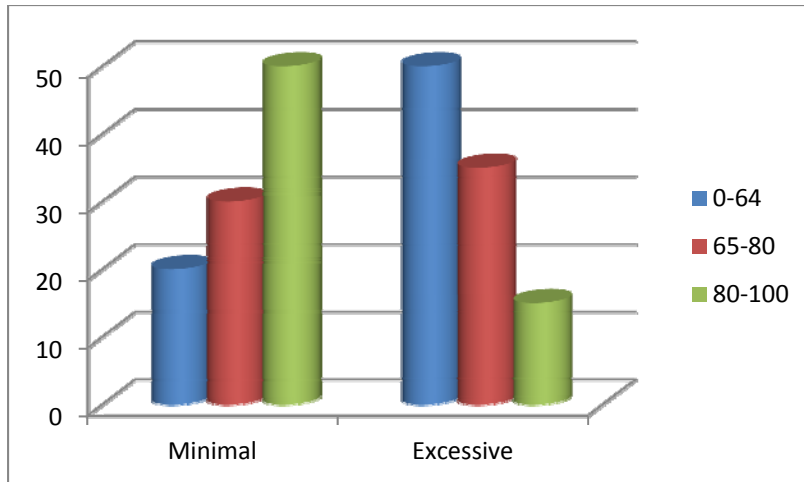
Elementary School ELA & MATH



Junior High School ELA & MATH

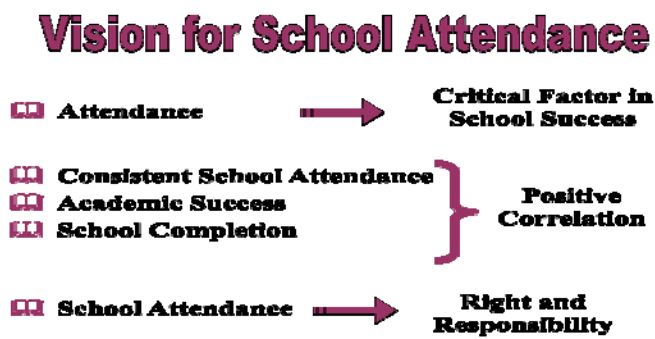


High School Regents Performance comparison between students with minimal amount of absences and excessive



There was a significant correlation between test scores and excessive absences.

Therefore, the Board decided to accept the administration's request to incorporate a better attendance policy. Before beginning to reinvent a new policy, we took a sample of other policies created or implemented by neighboring schools. In addition, several teachers were brought to the table to seek out current research and state laws surrounding attendance policy. The Parish Council which oversees the School Board had instructed that a policy be created that is consistent with the NYS mandates while supporting the school goals or objectives. The board had to keep in mind that creating something totally different might alienate many families and work against our goals. The greatest obstacle however was to implement a policy that was cost effective for our school.



After the board had reached consensus on the policy content, the new policy was drafted. The board decided to read the new policy during an open session and allowed parents and student to offer any input. The greatest concern was that students would now be penalized on their average for excessive absences. Parents believed that this was more of a punishment than a way to assist them in their performance. The administration explained that points are deducted for participation since the only way to participate is to be present. Revisions were made to the amount of points that can be deducted. The policy was then based on the information gained from the questions, comments and suggestions.

We immediately sent out the new policy to all parents so that they may better understand the new changes before the new 2010-2011 school year was to begin. We began to monitor the progress of all students that had an exuberant amount of absences before the new policy was incorporated. It was necessary to provide some kind of oversight so that we could make sure that the policy accomplishes its goal and whether to continue or modify the policy and to determine future courses of action. The new policy was sent back to the Parish Council for final approval.

Below is the policy created and currently in effect:

Saint Demetrios Greek-American Schools of Astoria Attendance Policy: (adopted 9/2010)

Any student who is absent from school more than 20 days will be not be promoted to the next grade. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case review of the nature of a student's absence with parents, teachers, and administrators. Students will not be granted credit in a scheduled course after his/her cumulative absence exceeds the following limits:

- Marking Quarter Course – 5 days- no credit for quarter.
- Semester Course – 10 days- no credit for semester.
- Full Year Course – 20 days- no credit for full year.

Notification/ Verification of Absence: Parents must telephone the Main Office before 9:00 a.m. to notify the school of the student's absence giving them the student's name, grade, homeroom,

and reason for absence. All such notes shall be received in the Main Office from the parent and/or doctor shall become a part of the official student record. Failure to bring in an absence note is reported to the Assistant Principle.

Absentee make-up Work: A student who, because of illness or other emergency, is absent from a class period(s), an entire day, or a number of days, is responsible for making up all work missed. The bonus for this responsibility belongs to the student. The student is responsible to make arrangements with his/her teacher(s) to determine what work is to be completed and the exact date when the work is due. Teachers will not be expected to spend extra time after school for students who miss classes because of vacation. In cases of extended illnesses in which the student's absence will not exceed two weeks, parents are responsible for contacting the Guidance counselor no later than the third day of the illness. In turn, the counselor will contact the student's respective teacher(s). Involving the counselor at this time is important not only to see that the work done at home is available for the teacher, but also to acclimate the student back to school and to counsel the student in need. It would also give the counselor the opportunity to confer with teacher(s) with reference to the student's progress aiding with a solid communication among teachers, students, and parents.

Please Note:

Repeated lateness to school or leaving early from school can affect a student's achievement as much a poor school attendance. For every time a student is tardy and/or leaves early, the attendance file will be noted. This noted instance would be viewed as the equivalent of one day's absence for purposes of enacting our school attendance monitoring procedure. Students who are tardy or have early dismissal cannot be considered for perfect attendance. In addition whenever any student fails to report to school, one or more of the following interventions may be initiated. These interventions are intended to prevent a student from reaching the 20-day limit.

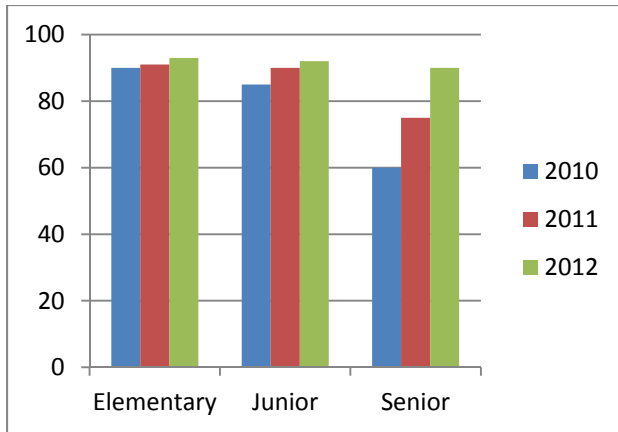
- Telephone calls to parents/guardians
- Letters to parents/guardians addressing student attendance
- Parent/school conference
- Detention
- Referral to the New York City Truancy Office

The Office of Truancy will consider the following as **EXCUSED ABSENCES:**

- Personal illness with a signed doctor's excuse
- Death in the immediate family(mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandmother, grandfather)
- Subpoenaed court appearance
- Representative for school at a school-related activity
- Authorized field trips and school-sponsored activities

Any absence not included above in this policy shall be considered an unexcused absence.

Below is the current performance since the new policy over a three year span:



Policies should be reviewed on a regular basis. They can become out of date, unclear, or even contrary to the way in which the school district is operating. Monitoring different trends in education as well as in your own school can help in creating policies for our changing times. It is important that everyone is on board and that proper procedures are followed when creating as well as implementing policy.

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