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**WALDEN SCHOOL BOARD POLICY  
POLICY ON STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

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Prepared for 1<sup>st</sup> reading: 9/18/01  
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Warned for hearing: 11/17/01

Adopted: **12/4/01**

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Copies to: Principal: \_\_\_ School Library: \_\_\_ Board Members: \_\_\_ CCSU: \_\_\_ Town Clerk: \_\_\_ Town Library: \_\_\_

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Introduction:

Vermont State law, title 16, Section 1121 requires children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school. In addition to this legal responsibility, regular school attendance is important for a number of reasons. First, it is critical to the academic, social and emotional growth of all children. Second, regular and punctual attendance is important to the development of responsible and effective work/study habits. Finally, as set forth in our vision statement, education is a responsibility shared by individuals, families, schools and communities. Clear expectations regarding student attendance support a shared responsibility.

Policy Statement:

All children between the ages of 6 and 16 whose parents or legal guardians reside in Walden are required to attend public school unless they are enrolled in parochial or independent schools, have a state-approved home study program or are excluded according to law.

Definitions:

*Truant:* A "truant" is a child subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for the school day or portion thereof.

*Valid cause for absence:* A child may be absent from school due to illness, observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency, situations beyond the student's control as determined by the School Board or such other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the safety or health of the student.

*Chronic or habitual truant:* A "chronic or habitual truant" is a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause for seven (7) days of attendance during the course of a semester. A twenty-one (21) non-consecutive day of absence within one school year defines truancy according to state law. Such absences may result in retention.

*Truant minor:* A child to whom supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative program, and other school and community resources have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy or have been offered and refused.

Procedures

The School District will determine if the student is a truant, chronic or habitual truant, or a truant minor.

The Superintendent or Principal will direct the appropriate school district staff to develop diagnostic procedures to be used for identifying the cause(s) of unexcused student absenteeism. The diagnostic procedures shall include, but not be limited to, interviews with the student, his or her parent(s)/guardian(s), and any school official(s) or other people who may have information.

The following supportive services may be offered to truant or chronically truant students:

- Parent-teacher conferences;
- Student and/or family counseling;
- Information about community agency services.

If truancy continues after supportive services have been offered, the Building Principal shall refer the matter to the Superintendent. The Superintendent may call upon the resources of outside agencies or the truant officer. The School Board, Superintendent, Principal and teachers shall assist and furnish such information as they have to aid the truant officer.

No punitive action, including out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, or court action shall be taken against a chronic truant for his or her truancy unless available supportive services and other school resources have been provided to the student.

**Early Dismissals:** The school will honor early dismissals only for family emergencies, family trips, or professional appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school time. A note should be presented on the morning of the dismissal explaining why the student is being dismissed. After the school day begins (8:15 am), dismissals will only be allowed with administrative approval. No person except the parent or legal guardian may pick up a student unless the parent or legal guardian has authorized other arrangements.

**Absence from School:** Parents/guardians will notify school on the day of a child's absence by calling in and/or sending in a note with a sibling. If the school is not notified of the child's absence, the school will make all reasonable attempts to contact the parent/guardian/emergency contact regarding the status of the child.

**Participation in Activities on a day of Absence:** In order to participate in any after-school activity, a student must attend school all day on the day of the activity. Activities include athletics, drama events, musical events, and other club activities after school. The Principal must approve exceptions to this policy.

**Tardiness:** Students are expected to be on time for school and for classes. The school expects that tardiness will be a rare occurrence. If students arrive after school begins, they must report to the office. A note explaining the reason for the tardiness must be presented within 24 hours. Three days of being tardy to school or a class will equal one absence. Unexcused days of being tardy will be referred to the principal who will schedule a meeting with the parent or legal guardian.

**Family Vacations:** The Walden school realizes that there may be times when a family vacation needs to be taken during the school year. It is the family's responsibility to notify the school two weeks in advance to work out the details of the student making up the missed assignments.

Legal Reference(s): 16 V.S.A. §1121