Policy 5113.1: Chronic Absence And Truancy **Status:** ADOPTED

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CSBA NOTE: The following optional policy addresses both chronic absence, which refers to students missing an excessive number of school days for any reason, whether excused or unexcused, and truancy, which refers to students missing school and/or being tardy without a valid excuse. Education Code 48260 defines a "valid excuse" for purposes of classifying students as truants; see the accompanying administrative regulation. Also see BP/AR 5113 - Absences and Excuses for information about methods of verification of student absences.

Pursuant to Education Code 48326, as added by AB 2771 (Ch. 154, Statutes of 2024), beginning with the 2026-27 school year, the California Department of Education (CDE) is required to post on its website information regarding methods of reducing chronic absenteeism, including the formation of school site absence intervention teams.

The Governing Board believes that absenteeism, whatever the cause, may be an early warning sign of poor academic achievement and may put students at risk of dropping out of school. The Board desires to ensure that all students attend school in accordance with the state's compulsory education law and take full advantage of educational opportunities provided by the district, and that students who are identified as chronically absent or truant receive appropriate support services and interventions as early as possible.

CSBA NOTE: The following paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. Districts are required to track student attendance for the purpose of reporting chronic absenteeism for the state accountability system (the California School Dashboard) and identifying students who are classified as truants pursuant to Education Code 48260-48273. Tools to calculate chronic absence, such as the District Attendance Tracking Tool and School Attendance Tracking Tool, are available from Attendance Works.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish a system to accurately track student attendance in order to identify individual students who are chronic absentees and truants, as defined in law and administrative regulation, and to identify patterns of absence throughout the district.

CSBA NOTE: In developing strategies for addressing chronic absence and truancy, districts may consider reasons for absences given by individual students as well as survey data using tools such as the California Healthy Kids Survey and/or the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey System available from WestEd.

CDE has identified strategies that have a positive effect in encouraging students to regularly attend school, which can be found on CDE's webpage, "School Attendance Improvement Strategies." Some of these practices include identifying and responding to grade level and student subgroup patterns of chronic absence and truancy; improving communication with parents/guardians, including using bilingual aides and sending out attendance emails in the language used by parents/guardians; positive reinforcement for improved attendance such as prizes for individuals or classes with the most improved attendance; and personalizing relationships between students and school support staff and/or teachers, including establishing homeroom classes for secondary students for all years of high school.

Additionally, CSBA's, "Seize the Data: Using Chronic Absence Data to Drive Student Engagement," provides research and strategies for districts to use to reduce chronic absenteeism.

The Superintendent, attendance supervisor, or designee shall consult with students, parents/guardians, school staff, and community agencies, as appropriate, to identify factors contributing to chronic absence and truancy, including in relation to grade level and student subgroup patterns of chronic absence and truancy.

The Superintendent, attendance supervisor, or designee shall develop a tiered approach to reducing chronic absence. Such an approach shall include strategies for preventing attendance problems, which may include, but are not limited to, efforts to provide a safe and positive school environment; relevant and engaging learning experiences; school activities that help develop students' feelings of connectedness with the school, including personalized relationships between students and teachers and/or support staff; school-based health services; letters alerting parents/guardians to the value of regular school attendance, including the use of bilingual aides and communication in the primary language used by parents/guardians; and incentives and rewards to recognize students who achieve excellent attendance or demonstrate significant improvement in attendance.

The tiered approach shall also provide for early outreach to students as soon as they show signs of poor attendance or if they were chronically absent in the prior school year. Early intervention may include personalized outreach, individual attendance plans, and/or mentoring to students with moderate levels of chronic absence, with additional intensive, interagency wrap-around services for students with the highest level of absence.

Students with serious attendance problems shall be provided with interventions specific to their needs, which may include, but are not limited to, health care referrals; transportation assistance; counseling, including trauma-informed practices, for mental or emotional difficulties; academic supports; efforts to address school or community safety concerns; discussions with the student and parent/guardian about their attitudes regarding schooling; or other strategies to remove identified barriers to school attendance. The Superintendent, attendance supervisor, or designee may collaborate with child welfare services, law enforcement, courts, public health care agencies, other government agencies, and/or medical, mental health, and oral health care providers to make alternative educational programs and support services available for students and families.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that staff assigned to fulfill attendance-related duties are trained in implementing a trauma-informed approach to chronic absence and receive information about the high correlation between chronic absence and exposure to adverse childhood experiences.

CSBA NOTE: State law establishes a series of interventions that the district is required or authorized to impose depending on the number of truancies committed by a student; see the accompanying administrative regulation. Habitually truant students, as defined in Education Code 48262, may be referred to a school attendance review board (SARB) if established by the county office of education or to a SARB established by the district Governing Board pursuant to Education Code 48321; see BP/AR 5113.12 - District School Attendance Review Board. Instead of the SARB process, students may be referred to a truancy mediation program operated by the county's district attorney or probation officer pursuant to Education Code 48260.6. Education Code 48264.5 authorizes, but does not require, students who continue to be truant after receiving these interventions to be referred to a juvenile court. Parents/guardians of students who are identified as truant may be subject to penalties pursuant to Education Code 48293, Penal Code 270.1, and/or

Penal Code 272.

Students who are identified as chronically absent or truant shall be subject to the interventions specified in law and administrative regulation.

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 46211, as added by SB 153 (Ch. 38, Statutes of 2024), a district may, beginning July 1, 2025, implement attendance recovery programs for students in grades transitional kindergarten-12 to make up lost instructional time and offset absences, including chronic absenteeism for up to 10 days of attendance in a school year or the number of absences a student accrued in that school year, whichever is less. A student's participation in an attendance recovery program may not be compulsory or punitive for such student. Students participating in an attendance recovery program may generate average daily attendance for the school year in which the program is operated, and that otherwise meets the requirements of Education Code 46211. For more information see the accompanying administrative regulation.

To provide students with an opportunity to make up lost instructional time and offset absences, the Superintendent or designee may implement an attendance recovery program for students in grades transitional kindergarten-12. Any such attendance recovery program shall be operated in accordance with Education Code 46211 and as specified in the accompanying administrative regulation.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 48900 expresses legislative intent that alternatives to suspension or expulsion be used with students who are truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from assigned school activities; see BP 5144 - Discipline and BP 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process.

A student's truancy, tardiness, or other absence from school shall not be the basis for suspension or expulsion. Alternative strategies and positive reinforcement for attendance shall be used whenever possible.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 52060 requires districts to include the rates of school attendance, chronic absence, dropout, and graduation, as applicable, in their local control and accountability plan (LCAP); see BP/AR 0460 - Local Control and Accountability Plan.

The California School Dashboard includes measures of district and school performance in each priority area addressed in the LCAP, including chronic absence for grades kindergarten-8. The Dashboard reports the degree to which districts and schools meet performance criteria as well as changes in performance from year to year.

For more information regarding LCAP measures see BP 0500 - Accountability. For grades 9-12, chronic absence rates are available through CDE's DataQuest.

The Superintendent, attendance supervisor, or designee shall periodically report to the Board regarding student attendance patterns in the district, including rates of chronic absence and truancy districtwide and for each school, grade level, and numerically significant student subgroup as defined in Education Code 52052. Such information shall be used to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented to reduce chronic absence and truancy and to develop annual goals and specific actions for student attendance and engagement to be included in the district's local control and accountability plan and other applicable school and district plans. As appropriate, the Superintendent or designee shall engage school staff in program evaluation and improvement and in the determination of how to best allocate available community resources.