



## Merit Preparatory Academy ATTENDANCE POLICY GUIDELINES

Merit Academy believes that regular school attendance is necessary for academic achievement and is a shared responsibility between student, parent, and the school.

Studies have shown when students miss more than 10% of class time, learning and long-term educational outcomes decline sharply.

Students bear a tremendous responsibility in the education process. Students must be in their classes on time and come prepared to learn (homework completed, necessary books and supplies ready). Whenever students are absent, they have the responsibility to arrange with their teachers for make-up work. However, the classroom experience cannot be duplicated through make-up assignments.

Absenteeism also affects a student's classmates and places a burden on teachers. Teacher time and energy used for re-teaching and preparing make-up materials is taken away from students who attend regularly. Similarly, students who come to class late interrupt learning for those who arrive on time. Parents play an important role by determining which student absences are necessary.

Students may occasionally need to be absent or tardy because of illness, emergencies, funerals, etc. To allow for these unavoidable circumstances, four (4) parent-excused absences are allowed per term, per class, without penalty. Also, a student may be tardy four (4) times per class, per term, without penalty. Any attendance issues beyond this limit will result in No Credit (NC) being issued in that class for the term until resolved. Parents can excuse absences by calling the attendance office (801) 491-7600 or sending a note or email to have them excused. Parents should include the date of absence and a parent phone # on the written note, email, or voice message.

### Student Check-in/Check-out and Excusing Absences:

- Parents may check-in students and excuse absences by sending a note with their student, sending an email to [attendance@meritknights.com](mailto:attendance@meritknights.com) or calling the attendance office at 801-491-7600 from 8 a.m. - 3:30p.m.
- When excusing an absence with a note, parents should include the date of the absence and parent phone number.
- **Tardies may not be excused.** Notes or calls to excuse a student's tardiness will not be accepted.
- To minimize classroom disruption, please arrange to check students out between class periods when possible.
- No student check-out requests will be granted during the last 20 minutes of the school day.
- Fraudulent excusing of absences by students will result in school discipline.
- All unexcused absences are considered truanancies (sluffs).
- Failure to make-up absences, truanancies, or tardies will result in a loss of credit for the class.

**Pre-approved Absence Requests:** Students are strongly encouraged to obtain absence pre-approval for missed classes. This is available for family events such as vacations, funerals, weddings, etc. This requires a short form to be filled out with information from each of the student's teachers. The request will be reviewed by the Attendance Office for final approval. These forms are available in the Attendance Office and should be filled out and turned in **at least one week** prior to the absence(s). Pre-approved absences will not be

counted toward receiving an NC, but all classroom work will need to be made up.

**School approved activity:** School approved activities will be marked as approved absences and will not be counted towards total absences in determining NC for classes.

**Truancies (Sluff):** Truancy (Sluff) is a confirmed absence from school without prior parent approval and is determined by the Attendance Office. Confirmed truancies cannot later be excused by a parent and will automatically result in an NC. Additionally, students who leave class early or miss class without first being properly checked-out by a parent or guardian, will be considered truant. No exceptions. Students with a truancy are required to go to Attendance School or In School Suspension (ISS) -at the discretion of administration. Multiple truancies will result in students and/or parents being required to meet with the Administration and/or a school counselor. Repeat offenders can be referred for In School Suspension, Out of School Suspension, Restorative Justice, Court, and/or Expulsion.

**Excused Absences / Tardies:** Absences must be excused within 5 school days. An unexcused absence is considered a truancy if it is not parent excused within that 5 day limit. A student is tardy who arrives late to class within the first 20 minutes of class time. After 20 minutes, the student is marked absent. Tardies cannot be excused. Students who first arrive at school after the school day has started, must check in at the Attendance Office.

Each term, upon reaching the 4<sup>th</sup> parent-excused absence or 4<sup>th</sup> tardy, students and parents will receive notification of attendance issues. The 5<sup>th</sup> absence or tardy will result in No Credit (NC) in the class or classes in which those absences or tardies have accumulated. Students with more than 4 excused absences or 4 tardies must meet with a counselor and go to Attendance School to have the NC removed and receive the academic grade and credit for the class.

**Attendance School:** Attendance school is set up to allow students the opportunity to make up assignments and time missed in class. At the teacher's discretion, students may make up attendance infractions in the classroom, in lieu of going to organized attendance school. This allows for more specific instruction and learning recovery. Make-up credit for a given class period must be done with the teacher of that specific class and must be made up during the current term. Work to be completed is determined by the teacher. There is no in-classroom make-up after the end of the term. Attendance school can make up absences, truancies, and tardies on the following scale:

- 1 hour for every unexcused absence or truancy (sluff) in each class.
- 1 hour for an excused absence above 4 in each class.
- 1/2 hour for each tardy above 4 in each class.

**Attendance School Schedule:** Typically Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays before and after school there will be Attendance School. Please check with the Attendance Office for the current schedule. Students are responsible for arranging their schedules to attend make-up classes with teachers and for any transportation needs before or after school to participate in Attendance School.

**Attendance School Costs:** Attendance make-up before and/or after school will be offered free of charge until the last three weeks of each term. During the last three weeks of the term, all attendance make-up will cost \$5.00 per session. Attendance make-up for previous terms will cost \$10.00 per session and will only be offered for one week after the term ends. Students will **not** be allowed into paying sessions **without** their

**receipt.** Students need to bring make-up work to Attendance School. No electronics, note passing, talking, sleeping, etc. will be allowed and will result in dismissal from the attendance session. All make-up done with a teacher in the classroom can only be completed in the current term and will be made-up free of charge during the term.

**NC:** A grade of NC (No Credit) will be given for any class with unresolved attendance issues (required Attendance School sessions not completed). If the NC is not restored by the end of the term, the student will have one week to make up the credit in Attendance School, please see above for details.

- An NC does not count against a student's Grade Point Average (GPA).
- An NC is treated as an "F" for participation in extracurricular activities.
- All NCs **MUST** be made up within one week after term ends.
- One week after the term ends, all NCs become "F"s and are calculated into a student's GPA.

**Attendance Appeals Process / Restorative Justice:** Students and parents may appeal, in writing, any necessary concessions. Appeals are reserved for unusual attendance problems (i.e., medically verifiable illness, etc.). Appeals should be submitted to the Attendance Office as soon as possible. Restorative Justice contracts can be arranged in conjunction with counselors, teachers and administration when needed.

**Excessive Absences:** A student may be referred to an administrator when he/she has excessive absences in a class. A meeting between administrators, counselors, parents/guardians and the student will be required. Unresolved, excessive absences will result in further discipline including; in school suspension, out of school suspension, restorative justice, referral to attendance court, referral to law enforcement, and/or expulsion from school. Absences in excess of 10 consecutive days require prior attendance office and administrator approval or the student will be withdrawn from Merit Preparatory Academy.

#### **Parent Resources:**

##### **English:**

[https://attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/AW\\_HS-flyer-1-pager.pdf](https://attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/AW_HS-flyer-1-pager.pdf)

[https://www.attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/toosickforschool\\_REV.pdf](https://www.attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/toosickforschool_REV.pdf)

[http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/RtP\\_Attendance\(2\).pdf](http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/RtP_Attendance(2).pdf)

##### **Spanish:**

[https://attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/AW\\_HS-flyer\\_Spanish.pdf](https://attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/AW_HS-flyer_Spanish.pdf)

[https://www.attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/toosickforschoolspanish\\_REV.pdf](https://www.attendancesworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/toosickforschoolspanish_REV.pdf)

[http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/RtP\\_Attendance\\_Spanish.pdf](http://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/RtP_Attendance_Spanish.pdf)

**\*Approved by Board of Trustees- January 21, 2020**

**Revised and Board Approved: 9/19/20**

## **Continuing Enrollment Attendance Policy**

### **Face-to-face program**

Merit Academy will not count a student as eligible if they have unexcused absences during ten consecutive school days. If a student has unexcused absences for ten consecutive days, Merit will make reasonable efforts to contact the parents/guardians of the student and make appropriate arrangements to help the student return and continue attending school. If Merit is unable to contact the parents/guardians, school policy will be followed and the student will be withdrawn from Merit Preparatory Academy.

### **Nontraditional programs**

#### **Distance Learning**

Merit will measure online attendance on a weekly basis in compliance with Utah Administrative Code R277-419 in the following way:

1. Student to teacher weekly contact either online, or by email, or by parent text, or by parent phone (unless a student is on an extended leave of absence from the school), and / or
2. Student demonstration of progress on assignments, coursework, assessments or progress toward academic goals during the course of the week.

If a student does not meet either of these, they will be marked absent for the week. If they are marked absent for ten days, and have not met the above criteria in any classes, Merit will make reasonable efforts to contact the parents/guardians of the student and make appropriate arrangements to help the student return and continue their learning. If Merit is unable to contact the parents/guardians, school policy will be followed and the student will be withdrawn from Merit Preparatory Academy.

#### **Blended Learning**

Continuing enrollment status for students enrolled in both online and face-to-face courses at Merit Academy will be based on the program for which they earn the majority of their membership days.

#### **Quarantine and Sick Students**

Face to face students who are required to quarantine due to exposure to Covid-19 or who are diagnosed with Covid-19 will be temporarily switched to distance learning and continuing enrollment will be tracked accordingly. Merit Preparatory Academy will make reasonable accommodations for students who are recovering from Covid-19.

Revised: 08/15/20

Board Approved: 06/29/20