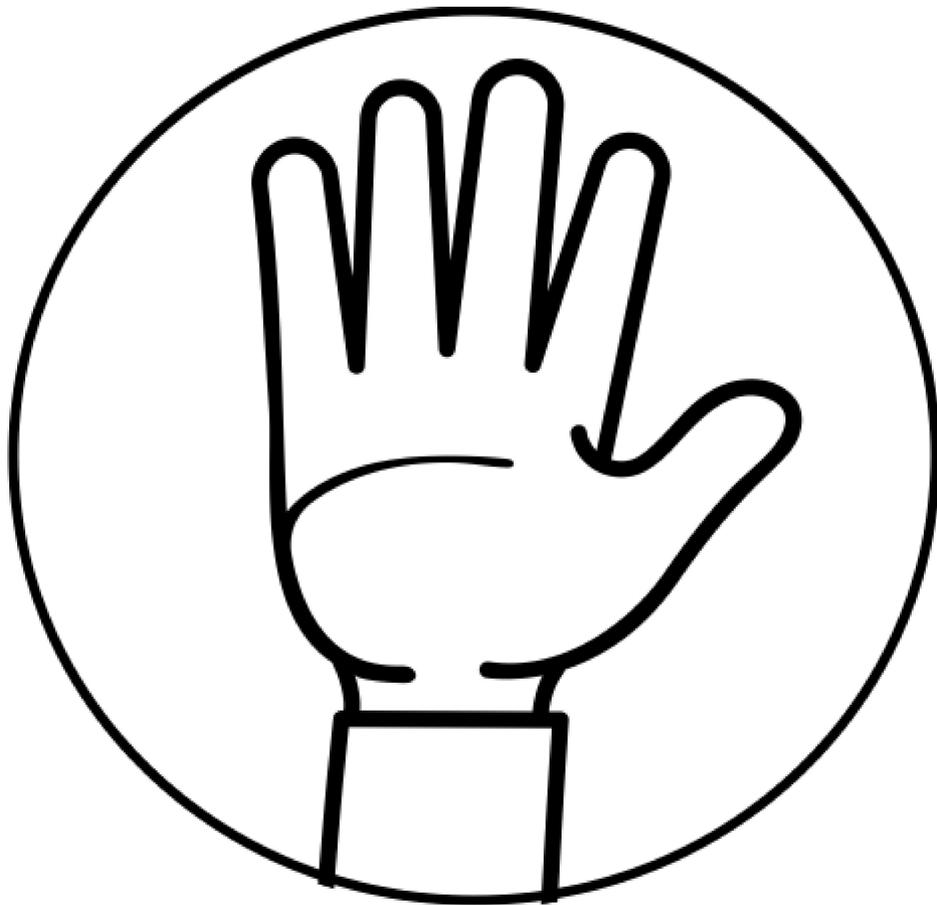


Section 9:

Attendance



Attendance and Withdrawal Procedures for Prekindergarten Students

Department of Early Childhood Education
Office of Student Attendance

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SECTION 1

Overview

Attendance Matters! Class attendance is critical for the student to receive the full benefit of the educational program. Regular attendance is a positive factor that develops habits of punctuality, self-discipline, and responsibility in students. Pupils who attend class regularly generally achieve high grades, enjoy school more, and are more employable after leaving school.

The purpose of this preschool attendance manual is to provide information about the laws and regulations governing school attendance and the procedures followed by the District to maintain compliance with these mandated procedures. Through utilization of the guidelines and forms provided in this manual, the District reinforces consistent implementation of attendance procedures across all school and district programs in RCSD. These procedures help ensure that attendance is taken accurately, students attend school regularly, and strong academic achievement for all students is promoted throughout the district.

Rochester City School District Policy

The Board directs the Superintendent to establish standards and guidelines for attendance, absences, excuses and withdrawal from the District. The expectation is that all schools will continually strive toward 100% attendance with students coming to school every day.

The District will focus on maximizing student attendance by clearly identifying responsibilities of staff, students, parents, and community, dedicating appropriate resources, and ensuring that students are successful academically, economically, and socially.

Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for ensuring that students arrive to school on time for each school day, that the school is informed that their child will be absent from school or classes, and are responsible for encouraging students to stay in school. The Board also acknowledges the role and responsibility of principals, teachers and School-Based Planning Teams in the improvement of student academic achievement.

Expectations of Schools and Community Based Programs

Taking accurate and timely attendance is a professional expectation for all teachers, as well as an educationally sound practice and an important student safety issue.

Attendance records are legal documents that must be accurate. Additionally, accurate attendance is important so that every child is accounted for every minute in the school building or Community Based Organizations (CBO). In the event of an emergency such as a fire, bomb threat, lockdown or any other dangerous situation, teachers must compare classroom attendance with the attendance of students in their immediate supervisory care. A discrepancy in attendance alerts administrative staff and building security that there is a missing student that needs to be found immediately.

Standardized Attendance Recording Procedures

It is a professional expectation that teachers complete attendance in an accurate and timely manner.

In accordance with Section 19:23 of New York State School Law, a teacher, supervisory staff or other suitable employee designated by the school board shall make entries into a register of attendance and verify the entries by oath or affirmation. See Official Attendance Oath in appendix.

§ 3024. Teachers responsible for record books. School lists and accounts of attendance shall be kept and prepared and entries shall be made in regards thereto, in such manner, as shall be prescribed by the commissioner of education by regulation or otherwise.

School attendance records must be kept for use in the enforcement of the Education Law 3024 and as the source for the average daily attendance used to help determine a district's state aid allocation. Therefore, student attendance must be recorded accurately and in a timely manner. Because attendance information is relayed to parents/legal guardians on a daily basis, attendance must be submitted online via Power School SMS for RCSD teachers and COMET for the CBOs:

- Preschool programs in elementary schools should enter attendance daily.
- Prekindergarten programs in Community Based Organizations should enter attendance by daily.

All registered students are required to attend classes as scheduled. Parents/legal guardians have the obligation to inform the school of his/her child's absence from school or from classes for the student's absence to be considered excused. The following reasons are considered to be excused absences:

- Child's illness
- Doctor's appointment
- Sickness or death of an out of town family member for up to three days within New York State or five days outside of the state.
- Court appearances
- Religious observance

In order for an absence to be excused, the parent/legal guardian must submit a verbal or written excuse to the appropriate school personnel within five days of a student's return to school from an absence. The written excuse or the transcribed verbal explanation from the parent/legal guardian shall be placed in the student's cumulative records.

The designated school staff will submit information in the comment field on the student's Attend Action page in Power School SMS. An anticipated student absence for two or more weeks due to health or medical problems must be documented by a physician's statement.

Records Retention

- In accordance with section 185.12, 8NYCRR and Board Policy 1120(A), all student records must be maintained as outlined by District Records Retention Procedures.
 - For students withdrawn from the prekindergarten program, the student's cumulative file will be sent to the Student Records Department as outlined in the RCSD Procedures for Purging and Transfer of Records Process. [Cross Reference: RCSD Board Policy 1120 (A)]
- Unless authorized by the Superintendent of Schools or his designee, and in accordance with
- §225 of the Education Law, no student record (electronic, hard copy, or any medium) or part thereof, shall be falsely altered, destroyed, or deleted for any reason.
- Any employee that falsely alters, destroys or deletes a student record (electronic, hard copy, or any medium) shall be subject to disciplinary action.

SECTION 2A

Attendance Procedures for RCSD Pre K Classrooms in Schools

Attendance Commitment Letter: Parents are required to sign an Attendance Commitment Letter at the beginning of the program to demonstrate their understanding and obligation that daily attendance matters to a child's success in school. Each family will agree to bring his/her child to the program to maintain a minimum attendance rate of 80%. Each household will receive a welcome packet on or before the 1st day of the academic year:

- The Attendance Commitment Letter, which must be signed and return to your child's school
- A Ready Freddy Calendar
- An Attendance Guide for Pre-K Parents

Daily attendance procedure: Teachers must record attendance in district's Student Management System by 10:00 am every day and **have until 4:00PM** that day to submit all attendance. For ½ day afternoon classes, attendance should be entered within an hour of the start of the program. Please be sure to accurately record if a child has a legal excuse for being absent (illness, doctor's appointment, death in the family...) by selecting "Excused". Attendance letters will be sent home to students who have **5, 10, and 15** Unexcused Absences, so it is critical that you record the type of absence correctly and in a timely manner. If an excuse is given to the teacher by a parent after attendance has already been entered, the office staff must be notified so the absence can be corrected to Excused.

Tardy Students: Children will be marked tardy if they are late.

Absent Students: Immediate communication should be made with the family by the teacher as soon as a student is absent from school. All communication and steps taken should be documented and dated in Attend Actions by an RCSD Teachers, Adult Family Educator (AFE) and/or Parent Liaison.

Monitoring & Tracking Attendance

Absence Letters: The Attendance Administrator will send letters to families of students with 5, 10 and 15 days unexcused absences daily.

- **Day 5 Letter.** This letter will include a pamphlet on the importance of good attendance.
- **Day 10 Letter.** This letter requires a home¹ visit to inquire about the child's whereabouts and implement strategies to improve with the child's attendance and prevent withdrawal from school. *The home visit will be made by the AFE and/or the parent liaison.*
- **Day 15 Letter.** This letter triggers another discussion with the family by the AFE / PreK Parent Liaison and/or Building Administrator.
This is a threshold letter, signaling that the child is in danger of being dropped from the program.

¹ Home visits denote a face-to-face contact with the parent and could be at the home or another location.

If attendance does not improve, and the child reaches 20 cumulative unexcused absences, the AFE/Attendance Administrator will contact the family to determine if there are any extenuating circumstance contributing to the child's absence. If there aren't any special reasons, the child **will** be dropped from the program.

Voluntary Transfer / Withdrawal Process

A child leaves the program either from voluntarily transferring to another school or from being dropped. The AFE/ PreK Parent Liaison / Building Administrator will complete the Transfer or Drop Form and verify that all actions to support the family were recorded in PowerSchool's Attend Actions.

- Voluntary transfers occur via:
 - intra-school: when a student changes from a ½ day pre-k program to full day or
 - inter-school: when a student moves from one school to another

- Voluntary transfer process begins when:
 - parents complete and sign the Voluntary Transfer Form
 - the School Administrator / AFE / PreK Parent Liaison signs off the form and sends to the Attendance Administrator for processing
 - the school sends the completed form to the School Selection Specialist with a copy to the Attendance Administrator

- A child **may** be ***dropped*** from the program after twenty (20) unexcused absences. The Attendance Administrator will:
 - verify that all actions to support the family were recorded in PowerSchool's Attend Actions
 - complete the Drop Form
 - send the completed Drop Form to School Selection Specialist and PreK Registration Clerk
 - notify the parent/family, the classroom teacher and the Adult Family Educator (AFE) and/or PreK Parent of the decision

SECTION 2B

Attendance Procedures for Community Based Organization (CBO) Pre-K Classrooms

Attendance Commitment Letter: Parents are required to sign an Attendance Commitment Letter at the beginning of the program to demonstrate their understanding and obligation that daily attendance matters to a child's success in school. Each family will agree to bring his/her child to the program to maintain a minimum attendance rate of 80%. Each household will receive a welcome packet on or before the 1st day of the academic year:

- The Attendance Commitment Letter, which must be signed and return to your child's preschool program or agency
- A Ready Freddy Calendar
- An Attendance Guide for Pre-K Parents

Daily attendance procedure: Teachers must record attendance in COMET online system by the end of each day. Data in COMET is uploaded to the district's SPA dashboard nightly, thus it's imperative for attendance to be in COMET no later than 4:00 PM. For ½ day afternoon classes, attendance should be entered within an hour of the start of the program. Please be sure to accurately record if a child has a legal excuse for being absent (illness, doctor's appointment, death in the family...) by selecting "Excused". If an excuse is given to the teacher by a parent after attendance has already been entered, the teacher or staff should go into the "Recording Child Attendance," click on the edit button and make the necessary adjustment. Please refer to the document in appendix.

Monitoring & Tracking Attendance at CBOs

Absence Letters: At the onset of a student being absent from school, immediate communication should be made with the family by the teacher. ALL communication and steps taken should be documented and copies of emails sent to the RCSD Attendance Administrator at nita.brown@rcsdk12.org.

The CBO Director will oversee the process to send absence letters home to families whose students have **5, 10, and 15** Unexcused Absences with a copy of the letter sent to the RCSD Attendance Administrator at nita.brown@rcsdk12.org.

- RCSD's Attendance Administrator will run weekly reports and share with the CBO Directors so it is critical that you record the type of absence correctly and in a timely manner.
- The first letter sent home will include a pamphlet on the importance of good attendance.
- The 10 day letter will require a home visit with the family. CBOs can use, **if they prefer**, the Child's Attendance Success Plan to guide their conversation with the family.
- The 15 day letter should trigger a discussion with the family and the CBO Director, that the child is endanger of being dropped from the program, unless a plan is put into place to improve attendance.

If attendance does not improve, and the child reaches 20 cumulative unexcused absences, the CBO director will contact the family to determine if there are any extenuating circumstance contributing to the child's absence. If there aren't any special reasons, the child **will** be dropped from the program.

Voluntary Transfer / Withdrawal Process

A child leaves the program either from voluntarily transferring to another school or from being dropped. The AFE/ PreK Parent Liaison /Building Administrator will complete the Transfer or Drop Form and verify that all actions to support the family were recorded in PowerSchool's Attend Actions.

- Voluntary transfers occur via:
 - intra-agency: when a student changes from one facility to another within the same organization
 - inter-agency: when a student moves from one agency (IBERO) to another (ABC Head Start)

- Voluntary transfer process begins when:
 - parents complete and sign the Voluntary Transfer Form
 - the CBO director signs off the form
 - the CBO coordinator sends the completed Voluntary Transfer Form to the School Selection Specialist with a copy to the Attendance Administrator

- A child **may** be **dropped** from the program after twenty (20) unexcused absences. The CBO Coordinator will:
 - verify that all actions to support the family were recorded in COMET (if possible) or send via email to the RCSD Attendance Administrator
 - complete and sign the Drop Form and email to RCSD with "DROPPED or WITHDRAWAL" in the subject line
 - notify the parent/family and the classroom teacher

Attendance Records: Oath of Accuracy

Section 3025 – Title IV, Article 65, Part I

- ☐ Each teacher, or other school district employee as may be designated by the commissioner of education under section three thousand twenty-four of this chapter, shall, by his oath or affirmation verify any information submitted by such person to the school district for the purposes of use as or in the preparation of school registers in such manner as may be prescribed by the commissioner of education under section three thousand twenty-four of this chapter, and such school records shall constitute the source from which the average daily attendance shall be determined. Such oath or affirmation may be taken by the district clerk or trustee, but without charge.
- ☐ A teacher or other school district employee as may be designated by the commissioner of education under section three thousand twenty-four of this chapter shall not be entitled to his salary for the last month of a term until he shall have made such verification and submitted such information as is required by subdivision one of this section, and the trustees shall not draw on the county treasurer, or collector or treasurer of the district, for any portion of his salary for such month until such verification shall have been made.

PreK Attendance Toolkit

RCSD Administrators and CBO Directors, please make sure you have electronic copies of each of these forms in your toolkit arsenal. All documents listed below are also in Spanish.

RCSD Administrators & CBO Directors	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attendance Commitment Letter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attendance Guide for Pre-K Parents
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day 5, 10, & 15 Absence Letters
<input type="checkbox"/>	Home Visits Documentation Form
<input type="checkbox"/>	PreK Attend Actions Report
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready Freddy Interactive Calendar with important RCSD dates
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preschool Referral Log (RCSD, Adult Family Educators only)
<input type="checkbox"/>	PreK Child Success Plan (<i>talking point guide</i>)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Voluntary Transfer Forms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Withdrawal Forms
CBO Administrator (Forms)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	CBO Bi-weekly Attendance Monitoring Report

Attendance Commitment Letter



Date

Student Name
Student Address
Student Address, Zip Code

Attendance Commitment Letter (*DRAFT*)

I, _____, parent of _____ agree to bring him/her to his/her PreK program starting **Day & Date** for a minimum of **80%** of the total days from **Month Day – Month/Day**. I agree to provide a phone call or a written excuse for absence due to illness to **name of RCSD School or teacher**. I understand my child will be dropped from the PreK program if these requirements are not met because *Every Minute Matters* regarding regular school attendance. Further there is usually a large number of eligible students on the PreK waiting list, eager to start school.

We do appreciate being partners in the education of our children.

Name & signature of parent

Date

name & signature of administrator

Date

Nita Brown
Attendance Administrative Analyst
Early Childhood Education

Attendance Guide for Pre-K Parents

ATTENDANCE GUIDE FOR PRE-K PARENTS

Getting Ready for School

My name is _____, and I am a big kid in Pre-K!



Today is a school day. I wake up in the morning.

I get dressed and brush my teeth.



I eat breakfast at home or at school.

It is time to go to school!



I walk nicely down the street with my family.

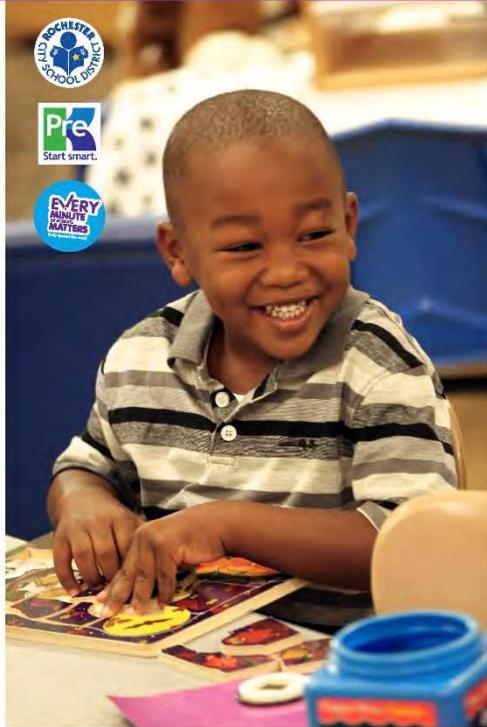


When I get to school, I give my family a hug goodbye.



I will have a great time at school today!

I will see my family when I get home from school!



School Success Begins with Attendance

We are excited that you are part of our family! A successful student and school year starts with good attendance because *Every Minute Matters*. RCSD's attendance policy states that all Pre-K students, including those with disabilities, must strive for 100% attendance. Good attendance makes the transition to kindergarten easier and helps to prepare your child to read on grade level by the third grade.

Below are some quick tips on how to ensure your child's success at PreK and beyond.

Excused Absences from School:

- Illness*
- Doctor appointments
- Court appearance
- Religious observances
- Death of a family member
- Participation in a school sponsored event

*Excessive absences due to health or medical problems must be documented by a doctor's statement.



Dear Teacher,
My child was absent from school yesterday due to illness.
Sincerely,
Mr. Frog
(Mother of Freddy)

If This Happens

My child cannot come to school today

My child is late to school

My child does not attend school regularly

Did you know that...

- You can REGISTER your child for Pre-K or Kindergarten NOW! Beat the August heat and crowds by registering as soon as possible for your choice of school and program.
- COMING TO SCHOOL every day helps your child to be successful. If your child is absent 2 to 3 days of school per month, he or she will end up missing an entire month by the end of the school year!
- You can HELP your child understand what to expect and be more independent in the morning by reading the "Getting Ready for School" story. (See sample story on back cover).
- We CARE when your child misses school! We will work with your family to see how we can help.
- We are PARTNERS in your child's success. Please review, sign and return the Attendance Commitment Letter **TODAY!**

What Should I Do?

- Call and send a written note explaining your child's absence to his/her teacher, agency or school's main office.
- Your child's absence will be considered unexcused if no verbal or written communication is received from a parent or guardian.
- Report to the school secretary or agency's administrator and get an admission slip for the teacher
- Your child's teacher will mark your child as tardy that day
- You will receive a 5-day, 10-day or 15-day absence letter
- If attendance doesn't improve after 20 cumulative unexcused absences, we will contact you to determine if there are any extenuating circumstances contributing to the child's absence. If there aren't any special reasons, your child will be dropped from the program.