

Topic:	Elementary Absence Check Systems
Effective:	May 2013
Cross-Reference:	Education Act; Policy/Program Memorandum 123
Revision Date:	March 2021
Review Date:	March 2024
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education (Information Services)

INTENDED PURPOSE:

The Halton District School Board requires all elementary schools to develop a system within available resources to be known as an Absence Check System.

PROCEDURES:

Policy/Program Memorandum 123 requires all school boards to develop a policy pertaining to “safe arrival” programs in elementary schools. While the Halton District School Board recognizes that parents/guardians have responsibility for ensuring their child’s safe arrival at school, we recognize the important role that our schools play in collaborating with parents/guardians to try to provide a safety network for our children.

In Halton, programs and procedures will use the term “Absence Check”, which more correctly describes their purpose and scope. An Absence Check System is a means to investigate the unreported absence and cannot be construed as a mechanism to prevent it. Such programs cannot guarantee the safe arrival of children at school.

Schools are obliged to keep accurate attendance records for each student registered. Since an effective Absence Check System is highly dependent on the accuracy of the information provided to those following up on unexplained absences each day, this procedure also describes the requirements for Attendance Tracking and Monitoring.

1. Supervision of students will occur according to the schedule developed by the principal reflecting the official school hours established each year. The supervision “window” will need to account for the arrival of students transported by the Halton District School Board. Students who participate in school-sanctioned activities that begin before or extend after the normal supervision schedule are under the care of the school. The school will communicate official school hours and the period of supervision on an annual basis.
2. All of our elementary schools use an electronic system to record attendance. In our elementary schools, attendance is taken twice daily; at the beginning of the school day and after one of the two nutrition breaks (this is at the discretion of the school principal).
3. Automated Elementary Attendance System - Absence Check
The automated elementary attendance system:
 - a. provides parents/guardians both telephone access and electronic access to report a child absent or late;
 - b. sends an automated call-out system, e-mail and text message to parent/guardian whose student is away without a reason.

4. In the first communication with parents/guardians of the new school year, the principal will outline the process for communicating absences and process to “opt out”.
5. Parents/guardians wishing to opt out of the Absence Check System should do so in writing to the school principal. All required information including who to call, is collected through the “student verification form”.
6. Principals are expected to review their requirements for reporting absences/lates on an annual basis with school staff and community. Examples of effective practices include:
 - Requiring all students who are late for school after a nutrition break or who are leaving school prior to the end of the school day to sign in/out at the office
 - Requiring that parents/guardians contact the Absence Check System to inform the school of any known lateness or absence
7. Unless the school is closed, absence check of all students is required regardless of bus cancellations or other conditions resulting in higher than expected absence.
8. Any student absence that is not reported to the Absence Check System requires follow-up. The principal or designate should make every effort to promptly contact the parent/guardian to determine the reason for the student’s absence.
9. Attendance records are to be submitted to the office when students are being taken out of the school for sanctioned activities such as:
 - field trips
 - sporting events
 - musical performances
 - other performances and cultural events
 - academic competitions

The Halton District School Board has also outlined an Absence Check for all secondary schools.

Secondary School Absence

The following process is followed by Halton District School Board secondary schools:

Period 1 Absence Notifications

- All secondary schools will send out Period 1 absence notifications through the SafeArrival application. Period 1 attendance must be completed promptly by teachers in order for office staff to send out the notifications before period 2 begins.

Evening Notifications

- Evening absence notifications are sent by phone and email, for the remaining school periods (excluding period 1) where no reason is provided for the absence.
- Late notifications are sent in the evening by email. These notifications are sent out automatically and no action by the school is required to initiate.