

ATTENDANCE, EXCUSED ABSENCES AND TRUANCY

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. The responsibility for regular attendance rests with the students' parents, guardians or with the students themselves when they become of legal age.

In order for students to develop to their full potential, the Regional School District No. 7 Board of Education deems it essential that students attend school on a regular basis. The learning experiences that occur in the classroom are considered to be meaningful and essential components of the learning process. Time lost from class tends to be irretrievable in terms of opportunity for instructional interaction.

A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.

Excused Absence

The Board believes a student should not be absent from school without the parents' knowledge and consent, therefore verification of an absence should be in writing by parent or guardian.

A student's absence from school shall be considered “excused” if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school and meets the following criteria:

- A. For absences **one through nine**, a student's absences from school are considered “excused” when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation to school officials.
- B. For the **tenth absence and all absences thereafter**, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
 1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);
 2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;
 3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);

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5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);
6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

C. A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless:

1. The absence meets the definition of an excused absence and meets the documentation requirements; or
2. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence, which is the result of school or District disciplinary action and are excluded from these State Board of Education approved definitions.

Unexcused Absence

A student's absence from school shall be considered "unexcused" unless the absence meets the definitions, listed above, for an "excused" absence, including the documentation requirements; or if the absence is the result of school or District disciplinary action.

Board policy with respect to unexcused absences stresses prevention and inquiry leading to remediation of absences. The schools will make all reasonable efforts to keep parents and students informed as to attendance problems and will make all reasonable efforts to help students improve their attendance when such improvement is warranted. Only when all local resources are exhausted is referral to legal authorities recommended.

Release of Student During School Day

The Board recognizes the need for students to be in school for the full instructional day. It is encouraged that early dismissal should be requested only in emergency or unusual situations.

Request for release of a student during the school day originating outside the schools must be handled by the administration to ensure maximum provisions for the safety and welfare of the student.

Dismissal before the normal end of the school day must be requested in writing.

Students who become ill during the school day may be excused by the school nurse, and transportation home will be arranged by the parent.

Approved 8/91; Revised 8/29/85;
Approved 11/28/95; Revised 8/2/01;
Reviewed 7/20/10; Revised 6/12/12
Approved 9/12/2012

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Truancy

The Board of Education must provide each child with a continuing education which will prepare the student to assume adult roles and responsibilities. Therefore, regular attendance and punctuality are expected from all children enrolled in our schools. By statute, responsibility for assuring that students attend school rests with the parent(s) or other person having control of the child. Every effort must be made to keep absences and tardiness to a minimum. To assist parent(s) and others in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education has developed the following procedures regarding students up to age eighteen (18).

1. Annually notify parents or other person having control of each child enrolled, up to age eighteen (18), in writing of the obligations of the parent pursuant to student attendance (C.G.S. 10-184).
2. Obtain from each parent or other persons having control of an enrolled child a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or other person during the school day.
3. Establish a system for monitoring student's individual absences/tardies.
4. Notify by telephone and by mail the parent(s) or guardian(s) whenever a child fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child's parent or other person is aware of the student's absence.

The required mailed notice shall include a warning that two unexcused absences from school in one month or five unexcused absences in a school year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs.

5. Identify a student as "truant" when the student has four (4) unexcused absences in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in any school year.
6. Hold a meeting with appropriate staff and the parent or other person having control of the child identified as a "truant" within ten (10) days of such designation to review the reasons for the truant behavior and to evaluate the situation.
7. Referral will be made to the CST or PPT to determine whether or not an educational evaluation is appropriate, prior to filing a written complaint with the Superior Court.

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Approved 11/28/95; Revised 8/2/01;
Reviewed 7/20/10; Revised 6/12/12
Approved 9/12/2012

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8. File a written complaint, by the Superintendent with the Superior Court alleging that the acts or omissions of any child identified as a "truant" are such that the student's family is a "family with service needs" if the parent or other person having control of the child identified as "truant" fails:
- a. to attend the required meeting to evaluate why the child's truant or
 - b. to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the truancy problem.

Such filing shall occur not later than fifteen (15) calendar days after such failure to attend the required meeting or such failure to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the truancy problem.

9. Provide for the coordination of services and refer enrolled students who are truants to community agencies providing child and family services.

A student who is identified as a "truant" may be subject to the following consequences:

- a. Promotion to the next grade may be contingent upon the student successfully completing a summer school program
- b. The student may be retained in the same grade in order to acquire the skills necessary for promotion to the next grade level

Persons who in good faith give or fail to give notice pursuant to subdivision (4) above, shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-184 Duties of parents. (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)

10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 00-157 and PA 11-136)

Approved 8/91; Revised 8/29/85;
Approved 11/28/95; Revised 8/2/01;
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Approved 9/12/12

ATTENDANCE, EXCUSED ABSENCES AND TRUANCY (continued...)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised 1995 - PA 95-304)

10-221(b) Board of education to prescribe rules.

Campbell v New Milford, 193 Conn 93 (1984).

Action taken by State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define "attendance."

Action taken by the State Board of Education on June 27, 2012 to define "excused" and "unexcused" absences.

Approved 8/91; Revised 8/29/85;
Approved 11/28/95; Revised 8/2/01;
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The administration has established an attendance regulation which reflects that time lost from class is essentially irretrievable in terms of opportunity for instructional exchange; that excessive absences rob teachers and students of teaching time that could be better spent on programs and activities; and that a student has an obligation to give, as well as receive, in the context of the classroom setting.

Definitions

The following is a listing of definitions pursuant to this regulation.

1. **"Absence"** - is when a student in grades seven (7) through twelve (12) is absent from an entire day or class or school with or without parental permission.

A student is considered to be "in attendance" if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.

2. **"Excused Absence"** - A student is considered "excused" if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school and meets the following criteria:

- A. For absences **one (1) through nine (9)**, a student's absences from school are considered "excused" when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation to school officials.

- B. For the **tenth (10th) absence and all absences thereafter**, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:

1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);
2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;
3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);
5. Student illness (must be verified in writing by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);

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2. "Excused Absence" (continued...)

6. Student's observance of a religious holiday;
7. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
8. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);
9. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);
10. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

C. A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless:

1. The absence meets the definition of an excused absence and meets the documentation requirements; or
2. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence, which is the result of school or District disciplinary action and are excluded from these State Board of Education approved definition.

Written documentation should explain the nature of, reason for and length of absence. Such documentation may be in the form of a signed note from a parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official who spoke in person with the parent/guardian about the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or licensed medical professional. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism.

Students who have been absent from school must turn in a note from a parent or have a parent call to explain the student's absence, with the exception of B.1, if it is to be considered excused, otherwise it will be treated as an unexcused.

A parent may appeal administration's decision in determining whether absences are excused or unexcused.

The school does not consider all absences from class or school which have been explained by parents to be excused.

However, for purposes of the reporting of truancy to the CSDE, the state approved definitions of "excused" and "unexcused" absences will be used.

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3. **"Unexcused Absence"** - is an absence from any entire regularly scheduled school day for which the absence is not excused as defined above. A student's absence shall be considered unexcused unless the absence meets the definition of an excused absence, listed above, including the fulfillment of the documentation requirements, or if an absence is the result of school or District disciplinary action.

A student may not accumulate more than four (4) unexcused absences from a given class each marking period without a parent conference and/or reduction in grade.

4. **"Class Cut"** is when a student misses a class and has no legitimate reason for doing so, or is tardy to or dismissed from school, and does not have a legitimate excuse.
5. **"Tardiness"** is when students arrive at school later than the beginning of school. Tardiness may be explained by a parent but any absence from class that results will be considered as an accumulated absence. As a result, a high school student may lose credit and a middle school student may be subjected to disciplinary action. Students tardy to school are responsible for work done in classes missed, as well as work assigned or due.
6. **"Truant"** is any student up to the age of eighteen (18), who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.
7. **"Habitual Truant"** is any student who has twenty (20) unexcused absences within a school year.
8. **"Loss of Credit"** for a high school student may take place upon five (5) unexcused absences from class a semester and ten (10) unexcused absences in one year. Prior to loss of credit, referral will be made to the Attendance Review Board.

Attendance Procedures

1. If a student is absent from school, the parent or guardian, will contact the school by 9:00 a.m.
2. If no contact is received, the school will make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or such person by telephone and by mail of the student's absence. A written record of these attempts shall be kept in the Middle School Principal's Office and the High School House Offices.

The required mailed notice shall include a warning that two unexcused absences from school in one month or five unexcused absences in a school year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs.

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3. The Building Principal will determine if the absence is unexcused, as described in definition 2 (A-C). When the student has four (4) unexcused absences, a referral will be made to the appropriate staff. The appropriate staff will arrange a meeting with the parent or other person having control of the student to review and evaluate the reason for the student being a truant. This meeting shall be held not later than ten (10) days after the child is identified as a truant. If the parent or other such person declines to attend the meeting, that fact shall be documented and the meeting will be held. The appropriate staff will develop a plan to help improve the student's attendance.
4. If the parent or guardian of a child identified as "truant" fails to attend the required meeting or fails to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the truancy problem, the Building Principal or designee shall notify the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall, within 15 calendar days, file a written complaint with the Superior Court under the Family with Service Needs law.
5. Prior to ten (10) unexcused absences, a Child Study Team (CST) or Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting shall be held. The CST or PPT will review the student's academic achievement and previous evaluations to determine if additional testing for special education is necessary.
6. After twenty (20) unexcused absences, the student will be identified as a habitual truant.
7. The appropriate staff shall coordinate services and refer truants and habitual truants to community agencies providing child and family services.

At the beginning of each new school year, any student who has had ten (10) or more unexcused absences will be identified as an "at risk student" and will be monitored by the appropriate staff. A letter will be mailed to parents and the appropriate staff will meet with the student to discuss the importance of regular attendance.

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Attendance Procedures (Grades 9-12)

Note: Students at Northwestern High School, through age eighteen, are covered by the applicable definitions and procedures pertaining to "truancy."

1. Absence Limitation

- a. Credit may be withheld in a semester course if a student exceeds five (5) absences or ten (10) in a year-long class. Prior to five (5) absences, Northwestern's Attendance Review Board will meet with the student and their parent(s) or guardian in an attempt to remediate the attendance concern.
- b. For purposes of this regulation all absences will count.
- c. Family trips and vacations will not generally be regarded as reasons for exceeding the absence limitation. Parents are strongly discouraged from scheduling vacations during times when school is in session. Any parents contemplating family vacations during school should contact the school at least two (2) weeks prior to the vacation to ascertain its probable impact on their child's absence and credit situation. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by administration and in accordance with the Connecticut State Department of Education definitions will be carefully considered.
- d. The House Secretary will send written notice to parents after three (3) absences in a semester and eight (8) absences in a year-long course stating concern.

2. Explanation of Student Absences

- a. All class absences, including those for tardiness and early dismissal, will count toward the absence limitation even when explained by a parent.
- b. Procedure for parents to explain absences:

(1) Absence from School

If a student is absent from school, the parent or guardian should call the school by 9:00 a.m. to report the absence. If a parent is unable to call the school, the student will be required to bring a note from the parent to the office upon returning to school.

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(2) Tardiness to School

If a student will be late to school, parents are requested to call the school office prior to 8:00 a.m. to inform administration.

A student is tardy when he/she arrives at school later than the beginning of the school day, which is homeroom. Seniors with senior privileges may arrive to school after the first period in time for their first class if they have a first period study hall. Tardiness may be explained by a parent but any absence from class will be considered an accumulated absence. The Housemaster of the student will determine if the tardiness is excused or unexcused. Tardiness will be considered excused for reasons listed under Section 1.B.(1)-(6).

(3) Early Dismissal from School

If a parent wishes to have a student dismissed from school early, the student should bring in a note from the parent to the House Office before school and secure an Early Dismissal Pass.

Students are not permitted to leave the building or school grounds without securing an Early Dismissal Pass.

- c. The Board of Education treats all students equally regardless of age. Students who are 18 or older are responsible for abiding by all attendance regulations including absences, dismissal, tardiness and class cutting. Students age 18 and over who do not live at home and who have filed with the high school office a verification of their legal and financial emancipation may provide their own verification.
- d. Failure to account for absences as described above will result in the absence being treated in the same manner as cuts.

3. Cutting Class

- a. Cutting occurs when a student purposely “skips” one or more classes, including study halls. A student is absent from a scheduled class unless (1) authorized in advance by appropriate school personnel, or (2) explained by a parent to the satisfaction of the administration, as described in the previous section.

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- b. Cuts will be handled in the following manner:

The second unexcused absence (cut) in a semester course and the third unexcused absence in a year-long class and will result in the loss of credit for the course. Parents will be notified each time a student cuts a class. The student will be placed in a supervised study hall and the parent or guardian will be notified of the student's status regarding loss of credit. Students who cut class will receive a zero for all work missed on that day, including tests and quizzes. In addition, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken by the Housemaster.

4. Appeal Process

A student whose credit has been suspended or denied has the opportunity to appeal that decision. The appeal must include the necessary documentation to show why the absences occurred. Only significant, extenuating circumstances will be considered for credit restoration. A student losing credit may appeal the decision as follows:

- a. The Principal or his/her designee will convene an Attendance Appeal Board, which will consist of the Principal, the student's Housemaster, Guidance Counselor, Special Education Chair and Case Worker (if appropriate) to review the circumstances regarding the absences.
- b. All requests for a hearing before the Attendance Appeal Board must be made in writing to the Housemaster within five (5) days of the mailing of notification of loss of credit to the parent.
- c. A hearing will be held before the Attendance Appeal Board within five (5) days of the request.
- d. The Attendance Review Board will meet with the student and their parents to review the circumstances involving the excessive absenteeism and develop an action plan to remediate the situation, if the Attendance Review Board decides to grant the student another opportunity to receive credit for the course. The Housemaster and Guidance Counselor will monitor the effectiveness of the action plan and notify the Principal of the student's status regularly. Before the last week of the class, the Attendance Review Board will meet to review the effectiveness of the attendance interventions, and the student's attendance history following the interventions.
- e. The decision of the Attendance Appeal Board will be mailed to the parent/student within five (5) days of the decision.

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Administrative Discretion

The administration will reject any explanation which it finds is not factual. The administration reserves the right to excuse any absence which it concludes has occurred because of mitigating circumstances.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-184 Duties of parents. (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)

10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 00-157 and PA 11-136)

10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised 1995 - PA 95-304)

10-221(b) Board of education to prescribe rules.

46-149 Family with Service Needs.

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