

GHS Attendance Policy Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

The below FAQ clarifies aspects of the GHS Attendance Policy. The full policy is available on the GHS website.

What is the rationale for the new Attendance Policy?

Attendance is a critical element that supports teaching and learning. In classrooms, students contribute to class discussions, engage in discourse, are enriched by the synergy of multiple minds working as a team, and benefit from the direct instruction of a qualified teacher. Students learn from their classmates and contribute to the learning of others. We believe that consistent class attendance is vital to students' success. The new Attendance Policy limits on the number of absences a student may have in a course before losing credit in that course. Our goal is to maximize the amount of time students are present in class through education of the consequences of the policy and proactive steps by educators to build strong relationships with all students.

How does the new policy differ from the old system?

The new policy places a limit on the number of absences in a course. Students who exceed that limit will lose credit for that course. The old system for managing student attendance assigned consequences for unexcused absences and placed no limits on the total number of absences. Our belief is that the new policy will be more effective in altering student behavior and minimizing the number of absences from class.

How can you lose credit and still get a grade? Why?

If credit is lost due to poor attendance, the student's transcript will reflect the appropriate loss of credit. Students losing credit due to poor attendance will still earn a grade in the course. The grade is included in the student's grade point average and may be used as a course prerequisite.

Is my child going to lose credit in a course just because he/she got sick?

The Attendance Policy is not designed to deny credit to students who, through no fault of their own, are unable to attend school or class due to illness or other conditions beyond the student's/parents' control. In January and June, students who will be losing credit for the prior semester will have an opportunity to appeal. Additionally, students who have a doctor's note may, at any time, petition their house administrator for an immediate appeal. This immediate appeal is limited to absences caused by a lengthy (7 days or more) illness or injury. To be eligible for the appeal process, students must continue classroom responsibilities and attend class faithfully.

My daughter is an athlete and her team leaves school early for away games. Is she going to lose credit for those absences?

No. The Attendance Policy recognizes three types of absences—no fault, unexcused and excused. “No Fault” absences do NOT count towards credit loss. “No Fault” absences are for school related activities (field trips, suspension, standardized testing, athletic events, appointments scheduled by student support staff, and assemblies); they do not count towards loss of credit.

Is there a difference between excused and unexcused absences? Why?

Any absence that is not “No Fault” counts toward loss of credit. While both unexcused and excused absences count toward loss of credit, students receive a grade of zero for all work missed or not handed in due to an unexcused absence. Students are allowed to make up missed work and apply it to their grade in the class for excused absences.

GHS will only designate an absence as an excused absence if it falls into one of the following categories:

- Personal illness
- Death in the family
- Court appearance
- Religious holiday
- College visit (This is capped at 6 blocks per class. After that, the absences will be unexcused.)
- Emergency medical appointments
- Family vacation (With the signed extended vacation form and the phone call ahead of time to attendance)

Sometimes my son has trouble getting up in the morning and making it to school on time. Could that lead to a loss of credit?

Students are to report to class on time. Any student arriving after the bell is considered tardy. Three (3) offenses of tardiness to any course, regardless of the number of minutes late, will constitute one unexcused absence. See the Attendance Policy for additional details on how the number of minutes a student is tardy affects the grades he/she can earn for assigned work.

Will students and parents be notified when a student misses a class? Is there a way of tracking how many absences a student has in a class?

Parents and students will receive an email and a phone call for each class that a student misses indicating the time and day of the absence and its status (no-fault, unexcused or excused). This email will also indicate the total number of no fault, unexcused and excused absences for this class. When a student reaches a point that is halfway towards losing credit, the next missed class will trigger a different phone call and email which will indicate that the student is in danger of losing credit.

At the house level, the Assistant Dean and the Guidance Counselors will work together to monitor student attendance. When a student reaches a point that is halfway towards losing credit, the computer will send the Assistant Dean and the Guidance Counselor an email noting the student's absences. The Assistant Dean and the Guidance Counselor will then take steps to meet with the student to explore solutions.

Who runs the Appeals Board and when can appeals be made?

The Appeals Board will be constituted by the Assistant Headmaster and be composed of:

3 classroom teachers

1 student support services staff

The Assistant Headmaster or Headmaster will serve as the Chair of the Appeals Board

An announcement will be placed in the student bulletin and on the Greenwich High School website that will state the deadline to sign up for the appeals process. The Appeals Board will meet after school during the week before midterm exams (January) and the week before final exams (June).

If my child loses credit, is there a way to make up that credit?

Students who lose credit will need to enroll in courses that allow them to make up the credit. In some cases, summer school courses offer credit. Accredited on-line courses or courses from other accredited institutions will be considered for GHS credit recovery on a case-by-case basis.

What happens if a student cuts a Learning Center – there is no grade/credit to be earned?

Learning Centers provide a valuable support to students. Students who have unexcused absences from a Learning Center will be issued school consequences such as detention and/or suspension.

How will this policy be evaluated and measured to be made optimal over time?

Our Attendance Policy has been well vetted and aligns closely with the existing policies in several neighboring towns. We are confident that it will help us meet our goals for improved student attendance at GHS. It is also certain that a policy of this breadth and complexity will require small adjustments. GHS administration will be monitoring the effects of the policy throughout the year. We will keep data on the number of students who lose credit, the number of appeals, and parent and student feedback on the policy. We will also compare attendance data from previous years to this year in an effort to measure the impact of the policy.

Is GHS doing anything to help students make wise choices about attending class?

GHS is committed to the success of our students. Our goal is that every student attends all classes, engages fully in the learning process and grows intellectually, socially and emotionally during his/her time at GHS. As part of the 2011 administrative restructuring at GHS, a new position of Dean of Student Life was created with five part-time Assistant Deans. Along with the House Administrator, Guidance Counselors, Social Worker and Psychologist of each house, GHS staff will be working proactively with students to build strong relationships and increase student connectedness to school. We believe that high school students are mature enough to understand their responsibilities and exercise sound judgment around attendance.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions – Added 9-27-11

The Attendance Policy states that students may not be called out of individual blocks. What if my child is sick in the morning, but with a little extra sleep, she thinks she can get to her classes later in the day. Can I call my child out for the missed blocks in the morning?

It is correct that we are discouraging the calling out of individual blocks. However, if a student is able to come to school for a partial day, we would rather have her present than absent. In the case of illness, a student can be called out for only the blocks missed. These would be excused for the missed blocks and would count toward loss of credit, but the student would be allowed to make up the missed work. If a student becomes ill during the day, only the school nurse can excuse her from classes.

If my family decides we have an important event and would like to excuse an absence for a non-medical reason will this non-medical absence be excused?

We trust parents to make the best decisions for their children. Parents may excuse their child for all or part of the day for non-medical issues. When reporting a non medical reason for an absence, a parent can use “family business” as the reason. These absences would count toward loss of credit.

The Attendance Policy states that a student may be absent (excused) for up to six college visits. What happens if my child misses Wellness, Health or PE (three block a cycle quarter classes) on the days he is visiting a college? Is there a way to make up those absences without losing credit?

The Attendance Policy states: For a quarter class that meets three times per cycle, credit is lost on the fourth absence (excused and/or unexcused). Wellness, Health and PE fall into this category. Because the number of absences is very few, consistent with pre-existing practice, excused absences in these courses MAY be made up with the permission of the teacher of the class. For example, if a student has an excused absence in health class, the student may arrange with the teacher to attend an additional health class or to make up the absence in another fashion. The teachers of these classes have the ability to indicate in the system that an absence was made up, thus not counting toward a loss of credit. If a student has unexcused absences from these courses, the absence MAY NOT be made up.

If my child visits the College and Career Center to meet with college representatives, will that absence from class count toward a loss of credit?

College Reps frequently come to speak with students in the College and Career Center and are here for approximately 40-45 minutes. College visitations, where a student visits a college campus, are Excused absences. Visits to the College and Career Center (for seniors only) are No Fault—they do not count toward the loss of credit limit. Seniors must bring the College and Career Pass to their teacher prior to going to the rep visit. Seniors will not be excused to visit the college rep if there is a test in the class. Juniors and sophomores are encouraged to visit the College and Career Center but only during their opens. They will not be granted permission to miss class for these visits.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions – Added 7-23-13

My child is an elite performer and misses school for competitions outside of Connecticut. Will my child lose credit for pursuing her passion?

One of the capacities of the vision of the Graduate states that students will “pursue their unique interests, passions, and curiosities.” We understand that for some students, their passion requires extensive travel. Students who expect to miss school because of participation in an elite program (athletics, Arts, academic competition, etc.) should meet with the House Administrator before the travel is scheduled. The House Administrator has the authority to exempt certain absences from the Attendance Policy. Students are expected to complete all academic work missed during their absence.

The Attendance Policy lists Court Appointments and Death in the Family as Excused absences (i.e., absences that count toward loss of credit). My child has no control over these absences. Would you consider adjusting the policy?

With two years of implementation of the Attendance Policy complete, we are making small revisions. We are reclassifying the Court Appointments and Death in the Family to No Fault absences (i.e., they will not count toward loss of credit). In both cases, the parent should call the attendance desk and report the absence. For court appointments, the student should bring documentation to the attendance clerk. No documentation for death in the family is necessary.