

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Title</i> <b>SCHOOL ABSENCES AND DROPOUT PREVENTION</b>	<i>Code</i> <b>JH</b>
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***HOLLISTON***

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee does recognize that parents of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons:

1. Illness or quarantine.
2. Bereavement or serious illness in family.
3. Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child.
4. Observance of major religious holidays.
5. High School juniors are permitted one excused absence during their junior year for purposes of visiting college(s). Seniors are permitted up to two excused absences during their senior year for purposes of visiting college(s). In order for these absences to be excused, students must submit supporting documentation from the college(s) visited.

A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the school administrator.

When scheduling tests or assessments, assigning homework, and determining due dates, teachers should consider and respect a student's availability before, during, and after major religious holidays.

Accordingly, parents will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justifiable.

Student Absence Notification

In the event that the student's parent or guardian has not informed the school of the student's absence, each school principal or designee will notify a student's parent or guardian within one (1) day of the student's absence. Each school principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent or guardian, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days in a school year. A school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day. The purpose of the meeting shall be to develop an action plan to improve student attendance. Said plan shall be developed jointly by the school principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent or guardian. The parties may seek input from other school staff and/or officials from public safety, health and human services, housing, and nonprofit agencies as appropriate.

Dropout Prevention

Any student who has not graduated from Holliston High School and who has been absent for ten (10) consecutive days unexcused cannot be considered permanently removed from school unless the school principal has sent notice to that student, and that student's parent or guardian. A written notice will be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and will offer at least two (2) dates and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent or designee, the student and student's parent or guardian. The notice will be written in both English and the primary language of the student's home, if applicable. The notice will include contact information for scheduling the exit interview. It will also indicate that the parties will reach an agreement on the date of the exit interview. The ten (10) day timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent or guardian, and no extension will exceed fourteen (14) days.

The Superintendent or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent or guardian present, provided that the Superintendent or designee has documented a good faith effort to include the parent or guardian. The Superintendent or designee will convene a team of appropriate school staff to participate in the exit interview. He or she will also provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent or guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

First Reading:	March 1, 2006
Second Reading:	March 16, 2006
Third Reading:	Waived
Policy Adopted:	March 16, 2006
Policy Amended:	November 5, 2009, January 8, 2015, January 22, 2015
Legal References:	M.G.L. 76:1B;76:16,76:18,76:20
Policy Cross Reference:	
Procedure Reference:	

01/22/15/la