

## Series 5000 – Students

### 1. Elementary and Secondary

#### A. Attendance

##### **(5) Attendance, Excuses, Dismissal**

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or other person having control of the child. To assist parents and other persons in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education (the “Board”), through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain procedures to implement this policy.

Connecticut state law requires parents and guardians to cause their children, from the age of five through-until age eighteen inclusive, to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session, unless the parent or person having control of such child is able to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until ages six or seven. Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or upon withdrawal from high school in accordance with applicable law, with written parent/guardian consent at age seventeen.

A student is considered to be “in attendance” if the student is present at the student’s his/her assigned school/class, 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. A student not meeting the definition of “in attendance” shall be considered absent. In grades 9 to 12, students are subject to the loss of course credit for unsatisfactory attendance and disciplinary penalties for tardiness in accordance with administrative regulations.

Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is lost instructional opportunity. The Board of Education requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent.

In grades 9 to 12, students who exhibit unsatisfactory attendance and tardiness will be subject to academic intervention and disciplinary penalties. The Board directs the Superintendent or designee to develop administrative regulations in furtherance of this policy.

#### **Definitions ~~(related to chronic absenteeism)~~**

**Chronically absent child:** An enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

**Absence:** An excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education pursuant to C.G.S. 10-198b.

**Commented [1]:** It is unclear why the number (5) appears here.

**Commented [2]:** Until June 30, 2023, a student seventeen (17) years of age shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student consents to such student’s withdrawal from school. Such parent or person shall personally appear at the school District office and sign a withdrawal form indicating such consent. Such withdrawal form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor or school administrator from the school that the District provided the parent (or person having control of the child) with information on the educational options available in the school system and community.

Beginning July 1, 2023, a student who is eighteen (18) years of age or older may withdraw from school. Such student shall personally appear in person at the school District office and sign a withdrawal form. Such withdrawal form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor or school administrator from the school that the District provided such student with information on the educational options available in the school system and community.

Beginning July 1, 2023, a student seventeen (17) years of age shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such child withdraws such child from school and enrolls such child in an adult education program pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-69. Such parent or person shall personally appear at the school District office and sign an adult education withdrawal and enrollment form. Such adult education withdrawal and enrollment form shall include an attestation (1) from a school counselor or school administrator of the school that the District has provided such parent or person with information on the educational options available in the school system and in the community, and (2) from such parent or person that such child will be enrolled in an adult education program upon such child’s withdrawal from school.

**District chronic absenteeism rate:** The total number of chronically absent children in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for such school year.

**School chronic absenteeism rate:** The total number of chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for such school year.

**Mental health wellness day:** A school day during which a student attends to such student's emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school.

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.  
Such documentation includes a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism.
- 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);
  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. Any student enrolled in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, shall be permitted to take two mental health wellness days during the school year, during which day the student shall not be required to attend school.
1. No student shall take mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.
  2. Mental health wellness absences will be excused when parent or guardian permission is documented by the student's school, regardless of the number of absences a student has accrued during the school year.
    - a. Mental health wellness absences will not be counted in reporting or referrals related to truancy.
    - b. Mental health wellness absences will count towards chronic absence calculations as students are missing opportunities to learn.
  3. **OPTIONAL: The Board directs the Superintendent to develop administrative regulations regarding monitoring and supporting students and families when students take mental health wellness days.**
- D. 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.

**Commented [3]:** This language reflects Public Act 21-46 (codified at CGS 10-198f), which went into effect July 1, 2021, and a memo from the SDE dated Jan. 24, 2022 (available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2021-22/MemoMHWdaysFall-2021.pdf>).

When the school in which a child is enrolled receives no notification from a parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort shall be made by school personnel or volunteers under the direction of school personnel to notify by telephone and by mail such parent or other person having control of the child.

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.

**Commented [4]:** Several years ago, the legislature removed truancy and defiance of school rules as grounds for Family with Service Needs ("FWSN") referrals to juvenile court.

Responsibility for completion of missed classwork lies with the student, not the teacher. Unless a student has an extended illness, all make-up work will-must be completed within five days after the student returns to school.

### **Excused Absences for Children of Service Members**

An enrolled student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, ~~as defined in section 27-103,~~ and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of the Superintendent or ~~his/her~~ designee, additional excused absences to visit such child's parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian. In the case of such excused absences such child and parent or legal guardian shall be responsible to obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by such child prior to ~~his or her~~ returning to school from such period of excused absence.

## Chronic Absenteeism

The Board of Education, in compliance with statute, requires the establishment of attendance review teams when chronic absenteeism rates in the District or at individual schools in the District meet the following circumstances:

1. A team for the District must be established when the District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.
2. A team for the school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.
3. A team for either the District or each school must be established when (a) more than one school in the District has a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher or (b) a District has a District chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or higher and one or more schools in the District have a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher.

The membership of attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, school counselors, school social workers, teachers, chronically absent children, parents or guardians of chronically absent children, and representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants.

Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for such truants and chronically absent children and making any additional recommendations for such truants and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians. Each established attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

The District shall utilize the chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education ~~when it becomes available. (SDE to develop by 1/1/16).~~

The District shall annually include in information for the strategic school profile report for each school and the District that is submitted to the Commissioner of Education, data pertaining to truancy and chronically absent children.

~~The Principal or his/her designee of any elementary or middle school located in a town/city designated as an alliance district may refer to the children's truancy clinic established by the Probate Court serving the town/city, a parent/guardian with a child defined as a truant or who is at risk of becoming a truant. (An attendance officer or a police officer shall deliver the citation and summons and a copy of the referral to the parent/guardian.)~~

## Dismissal

No school, grade, or class may be dismissed before the regularly scheduled dismissal time without the approval of the Superintendent or his/her designee.

No teacher may permit any individual student to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal without the permission of the Principal.

No student may be permitted to leave school at any time other than at regular dismissal without the approval of the student's parent/guardian. If a court official with legal permission to take

**Commented [5]:** This may be intended to refer to the SDE's Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts (April 2017), available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/Prevention\\_and\\_Intervention\\_Guide.pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/Prevention_and_Intervention_Guide.pdf?la=en).

If so, consider removing the language "when it becomes available (SDE to develop by 1/1/16)" and instead including the above citation as a legal reference, below.

**Commented [6]:** This is unnecessary to include.

**Commented [7]:** Does this district follow this practice? If not, consider revising.

custody of a child, or if a police officer arrests a student, the parent/guardian should be notified of these situations by the administration.

(cf. 5142 - Student Safety)  
(cf. 5113.2 - Truancy)  
(cf. 6113 - Released Time)

Legal Reference Connecticut General Statutes

10-220(c) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)

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

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10-185 Penalty

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10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA11-136, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes and PA 14-198, An Act Concerning Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members.)

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10-198b State Board of Education to define "excused absence", "unexcused absence", and "disciplinary absence"

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[10-198f Mental health wellness days](#)

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45a-8c Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report. (as amended by PA 15-225)

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10-198d Chronic absenteeism (as amended by PA 17-14)

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10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy - in general

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

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

[Connecticut State Department of Education, Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts \(April 2017\)](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/Prevention_and_Intervention_Guide.pdf?la=en), available at [https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/Prevention\\_and\\_Intervention\\_Guide.pdf?la=en](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Chronic-Absence/Prevention_and_Intervention_Guide.pdf?la=en).

[Memorandum from Connecticut State Department of Education Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Division Director John D. Frassinelli to Superintendents of Schools Regarding Mental Health Wellness Days \(January 24, 2022\)](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2021-22/MemoMHWdaysFall-2021.pdf), available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2021-22/MemoMHWdaysFall-2021.pdf>.  
[PA 17-14 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education](#)

Policy adopted: October 20, 2015  
Policy revised: November 6, 2017, September 17, 2018

SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Suffield, Connecticut

**Commented [8]:** Include new revision date, if revisions are adopted.

## 5113 REG

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Connecticut state law requires parents and guardians to cause their children, from the age of five until age eighteen, to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session, unless the parent or person having control of such child is able to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until ages six or seven. Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or upon withdrawal from high school in accordance with applicable law.

The Board of Education has directed the Superintendent or designee to develop administrative regulations related to academic intervention and disciplinary penalties that may be implemented when a student demonstrates unsatisfactory attendance or tardiness.

##### **Loss of Course Credit Academic Intervention and Disciplinary Penalties**

~~In~~ For grades 9 through 12, the Board of Education authorizes ~~the loss of course credit~~ academic intervention for unsatisfactory attendance and disciplinary penalties for tardiness in accordance with these administrative regulations. Any disciplinary penalties imposed for tardiness will be made in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy, which prohibits, among other things, the "[a]ccumulation of offenses such as school and class tardiness, class or study hall cutting, or failure to attend detention."

##### **Acronyms & Definitions**

For purposes of these regulations, the following acronyms and terms shall have the following meaning:

Truant: Any student five (5) to eighteen (18) years of age, inclusive, who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.

**Formal Attendance Contract:** Binding agreement between the school, student, and parent(s) that is utilized to support students who are experiencing attendance issues that are affecting academic success.

**Commented [1]:** It is unclear why the number (5) appears here.

SAT (Student Assistance Team): A faculty-based team comprised of teachers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, and/or administrators who monitor trends in academics and student engagement.

~~SRO (School Resource Officer): A police department officer who serves as a liaison to the Board of Education and school community. Suffield has a full-time SRO in the schools.~~

JRB (Juvenile Review Board): A diversionary program overseen by the Suffield Police Department that reviews certain adolescent discipline matters that would have otherwise been referred to the juvenile court system.

CREC (Capital Region Education Council): The State of Connecticut Department of Education assigned resource council that provides services to the Suffield Public Schools.

CSDE (Connecticut State Department of Education).

CHR (Community Health Resources): A social services organization serving the Suffield Public Schools.

DCF (Department of Children and Families): A Connecticut agency that offers child protection, behavioral health, juvenile justice and prevention services.

CIAC (Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference): The governing body for athletic programs in Connecticut Public Schools.

**Commented [2]:** Pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 10-233m, agreements with SROs must address the role and responsibility of SROs, including "daily interactions between students and school personnel with school resource officers" and "a graduated response model for student discipline." Referral to the SRO for tardiness and attendance issues may violate these provisions, and we recommend that the district engage other community resources in addressing these issues.

### Attendance Guidelines and Unexcused Absences

As set forth in BOE Policy 5113, 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. Attendance will be taken every day in each class by the teacher, or any other person authorized by the administration.

- 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. Such documentation includes a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism.
- 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);
  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. Any student enrolled in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, shall be permitted to take two mental health wellness days during the school year, during which day the student shall not be required to attend school.
1. No student shall take mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.
  2. Mental health wellness absences will be excused when parent or guardian permission is documented by the student's school, regardless of the number of absences a student has accrued during the school year.
    - a. Mental health wellness absences will not be counted in reporting or referrals related to truancy.
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- D. 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.

~~D.~~ Tardiness to class means not being in the classroom when the beginning bell rings. Students who are not in the classroom at the beginning bell will be marked "tardy."

~~E.~~ Timely notification concerning potential loss of credit will be sent to parents and students. Administrative procedures will require that a copy of the credit withdrawal warning notice be forwarded to the student's guidance counselor who will provide appropriate counseling concerning attendance matters.

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### **Accumulation of Unexcused Absences and/or Tardies and ~~Loss of Credit~~ Academic Intervention:**

- ~~3 tardies = 1 unexcused absence;~~
- ~~1 tardy where 1/2 or more of class was missed = 1 unexcused absence;~~
- ~~Unexcused absences (including skipping) trigger the credit loss process at the following thresholds:~~
  - o ~~3 unexcused absences = 1st formal written warning for potential credit loss~~

Commented [3]: Recommend deleting because these definitions are not reflected in the SBE guidance underlying the Board policy on attendance and absences.

- o ~~6 unexcused absences – 2nd formal written warning, mandatory parent meeting, & placement on attendance contract~~
- o ~~9 unexcused absences = full credit loss~~

**Commented [4]:** Recommend deleting because these steps are outlined (with additional information) in the chart below.

**Attendance Progressive Response Intervention Process:**

~~The administration will implement the following progressive approach to addressing attendance and tardiness issues. In extenuating and exceptional circumstances and/or in accordance with relevant law, the Administration may determine that it is appropriate to implement lower tier interventions even if the number of absences would indicate a higher-level of intervention, is at the full discretion of the school administration. In addition, success at any of the following intervention levels may result in the reinstatement of privileges as determined by the administration and/or Appeals Board.~~

**Commented [5]:** Adopting and following administrative regulations ensures that students will be treated consistently and fairly. Any departure from the regulations should be for exceptional circumstances, unless required by other applicable law (such as the ADA or Section 504).

<b>Tier 1 Interventions</b> <b>(3 Unexcused Absences or ## Tardies)</b>	<b>Tier 2 Interventions</b> <b>6 Unexcused Absences or ## Tardies</b>	<b>Tier 3 Interventions</b> <b>9 Unexcused Absences or ## Tardies</b>
<p><b>Tier 1 Interventions include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>Credit Loss</del> <u>Academic Intervention</u> First Warning Letter</li> <li>• Mandatory Parent Contact</li> <li>• Indicators of success will be determined at parent meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>Tier 1 Interventions may also include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of Senior Privileges / Parking Passes/ etc.</li> <li>• Probationary Status</li> <li>• Wildcat Flex Assigned by SAM</li> <li>• Detention for each unexcused class cut or class tardy</li> <li>• Eligibility Probation for athletics as required by CIAC, clubs, and all school activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>All Tier 1 Interventions plus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As determined by <u>the</u> administration, a mandatory parent meeting will occur with any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Administration</li> <li>• Family/School Liaison</li> <li>• Counselor</li> <li>• Social Worker/ School Psychologist</li> <li>• Case Manager</li> <li>• Director of Athletics/School Activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Formal Attendance Contract - outlines academic and behavioral requirements to <del>earn course credit</del> <u>promote successful course completion and award of credit</u></li> <li>• Weekly check-ins with School Counselor</li> <li>• Home visit may be required</li> </ul>	<p><b>All Tier 1 &amp; 2 Interventions plus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outside Agency Involvement <u>as appropriate</u> (Youth Services, <del>SRO</del>, JRB, DCF, CSDE, CHR, Clinical Support Providers, CREC Liaison, etc)</li> <li>• Formal Meeting with School Administration</li> <li>• <del>Loss of Course Credit</del> <u>Review of course requirements and potential loss of credit</u></li> <li>• Meeting with Counselor for credit recovery options &amp; graduation status update</li> </ul>

Timely notification concerning academic intervention (including potential loss of credit) and disciplinary consequences, if any, will be sent to parents and students. A copy of the credit withdrawal warning notice be forwarded to the student's guidance counselor who will provide appropriate counseling concerning attendance matters.

**Commented [6]:** This language was tweaked and re-located from a previous section.

## Appeal Process

1. ~~In the event of loss of course credit due to attendance-related issues, s~~Students and their parents have the right to submit an appeal~~the credit withdrawal. The appeal must be requested~~ in writing to the Principal within ten (10) school days after notification of credit loss. ~~School~~Upon receiving written notice of appeal, the Principal ~~with will then~~ assemble the Appeals Board to meet with the student and parents for the purposes of reviewing the appeal.
2. All appeals to the Appeals Board must be made in person, and only the student, parent(s) of student, and members of the Appeals Board will be permitted to attend the meeting. The Appeals Board will consist of a General Education Teacher, the student's School Counselor, and an Assistant Principal. The Appeals Board will meet at a mutually agreed upon time with the student and their parent(s) within a reasonable timeframe. If the student and parent(s) cannot meet within a reasonable timeframe, the Principal will establish a date and time for the meeting and provide a formal notice to the student and parent(s) of such meeting. If the student and parent(s) do not attend this meeting, the appeal will be denied and the loss of credit decision will not be reconsidered.
3. The Appeals Board will consider:
  - The student's attendance record;
  - Information provided by the student, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s); and/or the administration;
  - Documentation from medical personnel;
  - The student's request to earn back lost credit;
  - Other information deemed appropriate by the administration.
4. Appeals Board decisions will be considered final, and further requests to appeal will not be considered.

Regulation adopted:

Regulation revised:

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Suffield, Connecticut