

**SWEDESBORO-WOOLWICH SCHOOL  
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION OFFICES**

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**Kristin P. O'Neil, Ed. D**  
**Superintendent of Schools**  
**Administrator**

**Christopher J. DeStratis**  
**School Business**

August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The District's attendance policy was revised several years ago. Our policy can be found on the District's main webpage. I encourage you to review policy #5200, which can be found on the District website under *District Policies* or at the following link: <http://www.swedesboro-woolwich.com/Page/266>.

Regular student attendance at school is critically important for student learning; however, during a health pandemic so is keeping your child home when sick. When students are absent they miss essential instruction that is difficult to recreate. For the 2019 – 2020 school year, students with expected extended absences (isolation / quarantine) will be temporarily transferred to a distance learning classroom to continue their instruction remotely.

Excused and Unexcused Absence

- A. An absence shall be considered an "excused absence" for the purpose of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance, for the following reasons:
1. The student's illness;
  2. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan;
  3. A death or critical illness in the student's immediate family, or of others with permission of principal;
  4. Quarantine;
  5. Observance of the student's religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education;
  6. Requirements of the student's individualized education program (IEP);
  7. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
  8. The student's required attendance in court;
  9. Students sent home by the school nurse and the 72 hours required to fever free
- B. An "unexcused absence" is a student's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed as excused absences in "A" above. An unexcused absence may be counted toward retention, truancy, loss of course credit, ineligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance. Absence is expressly not excused for any of the following reasons (this list is intended to be illustrative and is not inclusive):
1. Family travel;
  2. Performance of household or babysitting duties;
  3. Other daytime activities unrelated to the school program;

4. Leaving school without permission when school is still in session;
5. Leaving class because of illness and not reporting to the school nurse as directed; or
6. Being present in school but absent from class without approval. Such absence from class is a "class cut."

#### Procedures for Persistent Absences

If the pattern of **unexcused absences** continues and five to nine unexcused absences are accumulated the district shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the student's parents, to address patterns of unexcused absences previously;
- C. Evaluate the appropriateness of action taken in consultation with the student's parents;
- D. Develop an action plan to establish outcomes based upon the student's patterns of unexcused absences and to specify the interventions for supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance, which may include any or all of the following:
  1. Refer or consult with the building's intervention and referral services team;
  2. Conduct testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
  3. Consider an alternate educational placement;
  4. Make a referral to or coordinate with a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
  5. Refer to the court or a court program as follows:
    - a. When the unexcused absences are determined to be violations of the compulsory education law and board policy;
    - b. When there is evidence of a juvenile-family crisis the student may be referred to Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part. "Juvenile-family crisis" pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-22(g) means behavior, conduct or a condition of a juvenile, parent or guardian or other family member which presents or results in a threat to wellbeing and safety of the juvenile, serious conflict regarding the juvenile's conduct, unauthorized absence from home, pattern of unauthorized absence from school, or human trafficking;
  6. The implementation of all required procedures for potential abuse, neglect or missing child including cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
  7. Engage the student's family.

**Although the District usually sends home attendance letters regardless of the reason once a child accumulates 5 cumulative and 10 or more cumulative absences or latenesses, the District will discontinue this practice during the 2020 – 2021 health pandemic. Instead these letters will only be sent for unexcused absences.**

We look forward to working with you to ensure that your child has every opportunity to be successful and learn. Regular attendance is an important ingredient in the recipe for success. If you have any questions about the attached policy or this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me or our child's building principal. Enjoy the rest of your summer.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Kristin P. O'Neil  
Superintendent