

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

The North Middlesex Regional School District School Committee recognizes that parents/guardians of student(s) attending our schools have special rights and responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of his/her character. Parents/guardians can help their children by not allowing them to miss school needlessly.

The NMRSD School Committee believes that each school administration has the responsibility to monitor attendance and intervene when there is a concern for the student's well-being and/or academics. There are circumstances where an absence should not count against the student.

Students will be excused from the attendance requirements for the following reasons:

- Chronic illness/hospitalization (documented by a doctor's note)
- Professional health appointment (documented by a doctor's note)
- Dismissal from the School Nurse the prior day with an illness/fever of 100 degrees or more requiring 24-hours at home
- Family emergency
- Death in the family
- Funeral
- Religious holidays
- Legal or court appointment (documentation required)
- External suspensions
- School-sponsored activities such as field trips
- College visits (2 per year – juniors and seniors only)

In instances of chronic or irregular absence due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justifiable.

Additionally, parents are asked to keep their child at home if they display any of the following:

- Fever of 100 degrees or more (until the child has had a normal temperature for 24-hours without acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24-hours
- Undiagnosed rash
- Untreated live lice (School Nurse must confirm treatment)
- Bed bugs
- Signs of infection of eyes, ears, nose, throat or skin

For these cases, a parent/guardian note from home will be considered an excused absence for a maximum of 5 times in a school year, and the note will accompany the child to school or be emailed to the school secretary the next school day the child is in attendance.

Additionally, if a parent/guardian sends a child to school with a fever of 100 degrees or more, who is vomiting, has an undiagnosed rash, has signs of infection (eyes or throat), or has signs of bed bugs, the parent/guardian will be required to pick up their child from school. All other absences will be considered unexcused.

A student must be at school, at a school-related activity (e.g., field trip), or receiving academic instruction for at least half the school day to be counted as present. Students who are not

physically present at school but who are receiving academic instruction from the district for at least half the school day should be counted as present. Examples of academic instruction include tutoring, online, or distance learning. Examples of what is not considered receiving academic instruction is taking home classwork or homework.

Parents/Guardians can help their student(s) by refusing to allow them to miss school needlessly. Parents/Guardians must provide a written or verbal explanation for the absence and tardiness of a student. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. Annually, parents/guardians will be provided a notice with contact information to use to inform the school of a student's absence and the reason for it. A parent/guardian will be contacted within three (3) days of the student's absence if the parent/guardian has not notified the school of the absence.

The district will also notify the parents/guardians of any student who has at least five (5) unexcused days in which the student has missed two (2) or more periods in a school year, or five (5) or more unexcused school days in a school year. The Principal or designee will then make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent/guardian and student to jointly develop action steps for student attendance, with input, as appropriate, from other school personnel and officials from public safety, health, and human services, housing and nonprofit agencies.

The district is committed to assisting students in completing their education. Prior to any permanent withdrawal from school by a student age sixteen (16) or older, the district will fulfill the written notice and exit interview requirements of M.G.L. c. 76, Section 18, so that the student has an opportunity to receive information about the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school, the benefits of earning a high school diploma, and alternative education programs and services available.

All School Handbooks shall contain procedures that give specifics on attendance requirements and definitions of excused, unexcused, and trancies. Administrators may use professional discretion in determining exceptions to the aforementioned policy on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, the schools are to adhere to and uphold any local, state, or federal laws pertaining to attendance.

SOURCE: MASC

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:1A; 76:1B; 76:16; 76:18; 76:20

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